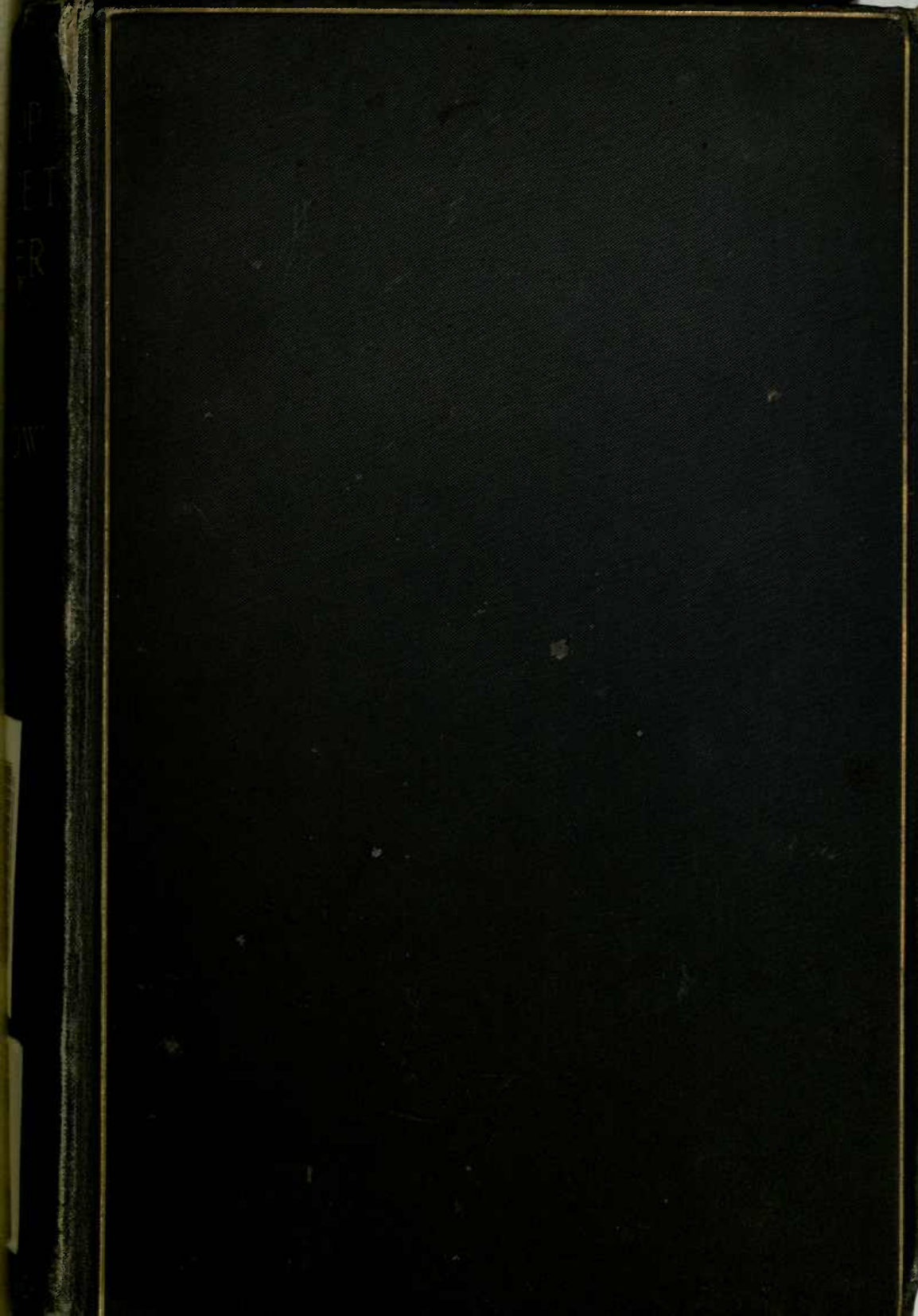




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BISHOP LOVELACE T. STAMER





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L. F. Newbury

A MEMOIR OF
BISHOP SIR LOVELACE
TOMLINSON STAMER

BARONET, D.D.

BY

F. D. HOW

AUTHOR OF "BISHOP WALSHAM HOW"
"BISHOP JOHN SELWYN"
ETC. ETC.

WITH TWO PORTRAITS

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PREFACE

IT will be seen that the greatest work achieved by Bishop Stamer was accomplished during the thirty-four years that he was Rector of Stoke-upon-Trent.

In dealing with this period I have ventured to separate the various great causes—especially of Social Reform—to which he devoted himself, giving some account of each one by itself, rather than treating them piecemeal as they severally claimed his attention from year to year. In this way I hope that reference to any special portion of his work will be more easily made.

I wish to express my thanks to all who have so efficiently helped me, especially to the members of the Bishop's family for the generous confidence with which they have placed many documents and letters at my disposal.

I have also to thank a large number of persons

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who have been good enough to send me letters written by Bishop Stamer. It has only been possible to print a few of these, but their perusal has greatly helped me to gain a true idea of the affectionate and saintly character of their writer.

F. D. HOW

February 7th, 1910

SIR LOVELACE T. STAMER

BISHOP OF SHREWSBURY

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

AT half-past four o'clock in the morning of Sunday, October 18th, 1829, a son was born to Lovelace Stamer and Caroline his wife, at Ingram's Lodgings in the City of York. The child's father was a captain in the Fourth Dragoon Guards, and son of Sir William Stamer, the first Baronet, of Dublin. His mother was the daughter of John Tomlinson, solicitor, of Hanley in Staffordshire, and so the baby received the names of Lovelace Tomlinson, the sponsors at his baptism being Major Norcliffe Norcliffe, Miss Stamer, and his two grandfathers.

It was no doubt due to the inherited qualities of his Irish and English forefathers that the child, who was afterwards to become Bishop of Shrews-

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bury, owed the sterling worth of character which showed itself from his earliest years. From the first he was looked upon as one in whom absolute trust could be placed, and a passion for hard work kept him always in the forefront of his contemporaries. Industry, perseverance, and trustworthiness alone might have made him a man useful and respected in no small degree ; but to these qualities were added a quickness of decision, a hopefulness, and beyond all a geniality which enabled him to perform the work which is described in the pages of this memoir. These latter qualities he inherited from the long series of Irish ancestors from whom he sprang.

And it was a long line, dating back to the year 1619, when a William Stamer, of Rettendean Hall, in Essex, came into possession of large estates in county Fermanagh, and settled there.

This man's son, also William, espoused the cause of Cromwell, and became a Lieutenant-General in his army. He was succeeded by Colonel George Stamer, who also served in the Cromwellian forces, and became High Sheriff of Clare, in which county the family had received a considerable estate called Carnelly. Of this the gallant Colonel was deprived in 1690.

Two generations later it is interesting to notice

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the introduction of the name Lovelace by the marriage of Thomas Stamer, of Ennis, county Clare, with Catherine Lovelace, of Ballybride, county Roscommon. To them was born William, Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1809 and 1810, who was noted for a profuse Irish hospitality of a rather regardless kind, and for commanding a regiment of Dublin Yeomanry during the Irish rebellion. For one or other, or both, of these things he was created a baronet. To those who care for antiquities it will be interesting to find that tombs of the Stamer family are still to be seen in Ireland, notably in the cloisters of Quin Abbey, where a memorial to John Stamer states that he "lived and died an honest man."

When the subject of this memoir was nearly nine months old his father resigned his commission in the Dragoon Guards, and set out with his wife and baby on the grand tour. They took two years and a half in the process, and few children of that age can have had such a restless existence, though a considerable stay, amounting in some cases to six months, was made at Munich, Venice, Florence, and Rome.

There exists an interesting diary of the tour kept by Mrs. Stamer, and from it can be gleaned an idea of the difference in time, trouble, and ex-

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pense incurred in foreign travel in those days as compared with modern times. Thus we read, "Tuesday, July 13th, 1830. Sailed from London to Margate in the Dart steam packet. Day lovely, and we arrived at Margate in seven hours and a half without having suffered the least inconvenience." Imagine a traveller to-day starting for Paris by going down the river to Margate, and arriving there considerably later than he would now reach Paris, and then recording that he suffered no inconvenience! A note to the above entry states that the accommodation on board the packet was very good and every attention paid, and continues, "Carriages not being taken in the Margate packet, we sent ours with our travelling servant from London direct to Ostend. Fare £6 6s. for the carriage, passenger £2."

The first experience of the party in a foreign town was unfortunate, for at their hotel in Ostend it is stated that the "charges were considerably more than at Margate, and we were not able to touch a thing set before us. May all our friends avoid this hotel!" It is fair to state that throughout the rest of the tour there was seldom occasion to make such serious complaint. Of all these matters, however, the baby must have been supremely unconscious, and he seems to have taken

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kindly to the life of a tourist. The first occasion on which he is mentioned in the diary is at Ghent, on Sunday, July 18th, when an entry occurs to this effect: "To-day dear Baby attained the age of nine months. He bears travelling wonderfully, and is not like the same child he was in London. The change has done *him* good, at all events."

Further references to his appearance and welfare occur from time to time, showing that baby-worship is much the same all the world over. Just one entry may be given. It was made at Liège, on August 21st, and runs thus: "Madame la Baronne de something came to see dear Baby in my absence, and pronounced him the loveliest child she had ever seen. At every place we stop at he excites the greatest attention, and everybody is delighted with him. Travelling seems to agree with him wonderfully."

A perusal of the diary from which these extracts are given shows that the future bishop was blessed with a mother of real piety and more than common cultivation of mind. Many passages might be quoted in proof of this, but one is all that space will allow. There are many expressions of gratitude to God for His goodness and for the beauties revealed here on earth, all of which point to the writer's religious feeling. When Venice is reached

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a fine passage occurs which shows a mind distinctly above that of the ordinary tourist: "Full of anticipation left Padua for Venice—long thought of, long cherished Venice! . . . Surprise and admiration alternately assailed us. As yet I can only speak *generally* of the effect produced upon my mind, as I have merely seen what lies on our way to the hotel. But of the splendour that *has been* I have seen enough to make me deplore that *that* splendour no longer exists, nor will it ever again be! Venice *ought* to be a free state. Lying singly and alone on the bosom of the wave, no foreign power *ought* to have dominion over her, and I feel that I hate Austria for the yoke with which poor Venice is bound. I would not have Venice 'Queen of the Ocean'—No—England *must* have the supremacy, but I would have Venice *free*, and second to England alone. They should be sisters, and as sisters peculiarly placed they should aid each other, but none should have lordship over them."

It is useful to read such a passage as this, that some idea may be obtained of the mother upon whose care Lovelace Tomlinson Stamer depended in his earliest years. He was not yet four years old when the family returned to England, and shortly afterwards his only brother, William John Alexander, was born at Cliffville.

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Cliffville was a large house on a hill overlooking Stoke-on-Trent, and was the residence and property of the Tomlinsons. At this house, one day to be his home, the future bishop spent by far the greater part of his childhood, being thus closely connected from his earliest years with the place that was to be the scene of his longest and in many ways most important work. His father purchased a place called Beauchamp, on the Dublin side of Bray, but the young Lovelace was not a great deal there, and after his mother's death, in 1872, he sold the property.

At the age of eight he was sent to Mr. Fleming's school, at Bootle. There is still preserved a packet of old yellow letters written during Lovelace Stamer's years at this school. Some are from his grandfather Tomlinson to his grandmother, who, during a visit to Liverpool, took occasion to visit him at school. These letters exhibit the greatest affection and interest, and are just what might be expected from the fact that Cliffville had become such a real home to the small boy. Thus in a letter dated "Cliffville, Thursday morning, 18th October, 1838," Mr. Tomlinson wrote as follows: "Give my dearest love to Lovelace and tell him that his uncle and myself shall drink his good health in a bumper at Dinner, with our sincerest wishes

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for many happy returns of his Birthday, and that he will not forget (what I am so anxious for him to attain) to be both a Gentleman and a Scholar.”

The other letters in the packet are from Lovelace himself to his mother and grandparents. The handwriting is extraordinarily good for a boy of his age, and it will be seen from the following extracts that his education was already in advance of that of most children of eight and nine years. There is, too, evidence of a certain serious habit of mind, which grew with his growth, and, being highly developed by the time he was a Cambridge undergraduate, remained with him always. In these letters, however, there is a delightful mixture of childishness which makes them very pleasant reading. Here are one or two examples :

“ *Bootle, 5 April, [1838 ?]*

My most beloved Mama,

I thank you very much for the most kind letter I received from you. I now write to you according to your desire what I shall want. Lindley's French Phrases, and Lebrethon's French Grammar. Give my most affectionate love to all my aunts for me. I hope that poor Matilda is better, and that you don't feel the loss you said of. Give my most

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affectionate love to dear Papa. I know the rules perfectly well. Believe me your affectionate Son,

L. T. STAMER."

"Sea View, Bootle, September 4th, 1838.

Dear Grandmama,

Tell Grandpapa that my class is learning 'As in præsentî' in Latin Grammar, Ellis' Latin Exercises, and Valpy's Latin Delectus, all which lessons we must careffly [*sic*] perform. If not, we write them out several times. . . . Please to send me some peaches and bun loaf.

P.S.—I received your kind letter to-day, for which I thank you. I am sorry that you should have reason to complain of my silence. I shall endeavour to fulfill your wishes in future by writing oftener.

I remain, dear Grandpapa,

Your affectionate Grandson,

L. T. STAMER."

"Sea View, Bootle, November 3rd, 1838.

My dear Grandpapa,

I hope you are well. I thank you very much for the half-crown that you sent me as a present on my Birthday. . . .

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A letter from Mama brought very good news, both Papa and Mama are returning instead of going to Paris for the winter. . . .

Give my best love to Uncle and Grandmama, tell her that I am very much obliged for the sponge cakes and preserved peaches. I hope you are well. Mr. Wilson lectures on Chemistry. The last was on Bromine. The name is derived from the Greek word Brōmos, signifying a bad smell. Iodine is very important for removing swellings in the glands, and if you should have any swellings you should get some of it. It resembles small dark coloured slate, it was first discovered by Courtois. Fluorine is much stronger than Bromine and is very little known. Please to tell Mama to bring me a whip when she comes to see me. The Christmas Holydays are very near, I think it will be the twelfth of December. I hope you will be ready to see me. . . .

Tell Mama to bring Willy [his little brother] to Bootle. He will like it very much and see the Irish packets.

I remain, dear Grandpapa,

Your affect. grandson

L. T. STAMER."

A really extraordinary letter from a child who

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had only just passed his ninth birthday ! The last part comes as a real relief after the precocious dissertation on chemicals. In another letter of the same period, written to his mother, he asks to have some " Barnbracks " sent to him. These are cakes made with currants and raisins. It is possible that the first half of the word may be " barm," the second half, " brack," means, in Irish, " speckled." These little symptoms of an ordinary small boy's disposition take away from the slightly priggish style of some of the letters.

From Mr. Fleming's school at Bootle he proceeded, while still very young, to the English Institution at Mannheim. This was a private tutor's establishment for English boys and was kept by a Mr. H. Lovell. There he remained until he was twelve years old, receiving on his departure a quaint little fat book, bound in black and gold, with the title, " Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis en Grèce." An inscription tells that at Easter, 1842, it was " presented to Master Lovelace Stamer as a slight testimonial of entire approval of his exertions in every branch of his studies, particularly in Greek." It was not, however, for the knowledge of Greek so much as for that of German that he was chiefly indebted to his sojourn at Mannheim, as will be seen when mention is made of his career at Rugby.

CHAPTER II

RUGBY AND CAMBRIDGE

IN 1843 Stamer went to Rugby, of which Dr. A. C. Tait, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, was headmaster. His house was Highton's, exactly opposite the School House. This house did not rank very high at that time, the discipline being decidedly slack. It may be assumed that Highton's gained more advantage from the arrival of a boy of Stamer's sterling character, than Stamer did from being at Highton's. However, the manly and honourable standard which has always been a chief characteristic of Rugby School had its due influence in fostering the good qualities and disposition Stamer brought with him. One or two old school-fellows survive to give some account of him at this period.

As to his personal appearance, one says, "He had always *very* bright eyes." Another writes, "Stamer was then, as always, a charming personality—*ingenui vultus puer, ingenuique pudoris*." This same school friend adds, "His influence in Highton's

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House was altogether for good, and the remembrance of it continued after he was gone. I was at Highton's for four more years after this."

Mr. F. Scrivens, a contemporary at Rugby, remembers the advantage it was to Stamer to have lived for some years in Germany. His recollections must be quoted.

"At Rugby the late Bishop was a most energetic boy, great in school work and great in sports. He was a most genial and good-natured chap. I was in the little study with him for some years, and I think I never saw him angry. One conspicuous evidence of his good-nature was this. He had been at a school in Germany and so was familiar with the language. German was just beginning to be taught in the school, and we all hated it. When it got to be known that Stamer was 'up' in it, our study was beset by boys, even from the other boarding-houses, coming for 'construes' of their German lessons. I used to think it a great nuisance; but I think Stamer never once refused. He would pretend to be angry and say, 'What an everlasting bother you fellows are with your "construes,"' but it always ended with, 'Oh, well, squat down, and I'll see what I can do for you!'"

At the school examinations of Christmas, 1844, he was in the Lower Fifth, and was placed in the

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First Class in Modern Languages. Some idea can be obtained of his industry from two facts. In the first place he won "Form prizes" as he rose in the school. These usually fall to the lot of the steady workers, while prizes for special subjects are frequently won by more brilliant if less persevering competitors. It is interesting to notice this point, for the quality of steady industry marked him out through all his life as one of those quiet thorough workers on whom the well-being of both Church and State depends, far more than upon those whose gifts are of a more flashy and temporarily attractive kind.

The other fact which points to his industry at Rugby is to be found in the School Examinations List of Christmas, 1846, where his name appears in all four extra subjects. It was allowed, but not ordered, that every boy should take up any or all of four subjects in addition to the ordinary Form Examination. Stamer, then in the Fifth Form, took all four, and appeared in the first class in Divinity and History, in the first class in Modern Languages, and in the second class of each of the other two, viz. Classics and Mathematics.

In 1847 he had reached the Sixth Form and appeared at the head of the second class in Divinity and History, and as one of three to obtain a first

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class in Modern Languages, the other two being Göschen, afterwards Lord Göschen, and Parry, afterwards Bishop of Dover and a lifelong friend.

Of other notable men who were in the Sixth Form at Rugby with Stamer, mention may be made of A. J. Butler, afterwards Headmaster of Haileybury, who did not long survive the Bishop of Shrewsbury; Lushington, who was afterwards Sir Godfrey Lushington and Permanent Under Secretary at the Home Office; and Jex Blake, now Dean of Wells.

At the end of 1848 Stamer left Rugby. He had inspired both masters and boys with respect for his character and capabilities, and had made several warm friendships. Beneath a quiet demeanour and a sobriety of conduct, inherited from his mother's family, there was a warm Irish heart which endeared him to many. It does not seem clear whether his nickname of "Sam" was originally given him at Rugby or at Cambridge, but no one who looks back on his own school and college days can imagine any but a real good fellow getting a nickname of that description. An abbreviated Christian name—especially when it belongs not at all to the man on whom it is bestowed—is invariably a term of affection.

The judgment of his schoolfellows is well summed

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up by one who writes : " Never was a more cheery genial companion, or one more trusted and respected for absolute straightforwardness than he was at Rugby. Ready to do his best in whatever he was engaged, his kindly, generous nature, with an unfailing hopefulness of disposition, made him most popular amongst his fellows, whilst in matters affecting the tone and morals of his house he might be depended upon to be on the right side, without a trace of priggishness for which Rugby in the forties had the credit, and not entirely without reason."

What Stamer's masters thought of him at Rugby can be seen from two letters which have been preserved. They were both written at the time of his leaving school.

The first is from his Housemaster :

" Rugby, December 28, 1848.

My dear Sir,

I cannot part with your son without expressing the very great satisfaction which I have uniformly had both in his excellent conduct and persevering industry. His talents are very good and I look forward to his gaining considerable distinction at Cambridge. We shall always have the greatest pleasure in seeing him when he is able to

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pay us a visit, and shall watch his future career with great interest.

I remain, my dear sir,

Yours very truly,

H. HIGHTON.

Sir Lovelace Stamer, Bart."

The other is from the Headmaster :

" Elmdon, Nr. Birmingham,

28th December, 1848.

My dear Sir,

I must write to you at the close of your son's Rugby life to say how entirely satisfied I am with all that I have seen of him. There is no one in the 6th Form in whom I feel more entire confidence, and he has always appeared anxious to improve. His name appears in a very creditable place in the Class List. With kind regards to Lady Stamer and your son,

I remain, my dear Sir,

Yrs. faithfully,

A. C. TAIT."

With these letters Stamer's Rugby career may fitly be left.

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It should be noted that throughout these years he spent the holidays, as a rule, with the Tomlinsons at Cliffville. There are those still living at Stoke-on-Trent who can remember him as a Rugby boy, driving down with the family on Sundays and marching up the parish church swinging a silver-headed cane.

In 1849 he proceeded to Trinity, Cambridge, and a letter exists which is interesting, both on account of its reference to Mr. Cotton, a Rugby master, who was afterwards Headmaster of Marlborough, and subsequently Bishop of Calcutta, and also as showing that Stamer's character stood so high that a special point was stretched on his behalf when he was entering Trinity. The letter runs as follows :

" Trin. Coll. Cambridge,
20th April, 1849.

My dear Fisher,

When Mr. Stamer's certificate arrived, I replied that my side was at present full, and recommended application to Atkinson. Now the fact is that until all the three sides are full the Master will not permit any one tutor to admit a supernumerary ; but after that time he will admit on each side some three or four who are very highly recommended. After I had declined admitting Mr.

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Stamer, I wrote to Mr. Cotton, of Rugby, to know what his opinion was, and that is in so many points favourable that with the help of your letters I incline to think I could ask the Master to admit him as one of the select few on my own side in June. The matter had therefore better rest for the present on that footing. I will, in any case, have Mr. Stamer admitted, and I will, if possible, admit him on my own side.

Believe me, yours very truly,

W. H. THOMPSON."

The October term saw Stamer established at Trinity, and his career at Cambridge was to have in several ways a great influence on his future life. It was there that he made a close friend of J. P. Langley, of St. John's College, who had, indeed, been at Rugby with him, but had not in those days been more than an acquaintance. This friendship led to a very interesting period of work when, early in his ministry, he was curate of Turvey, in Bedfordshire, as will be seen later on, and it was also one of those lifelong friendships which have proved so valuable to many men who have been called to positions of great and anxious responsibility.

It was at Cambridge, too, that Lovelace Stamer

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first made friends with William D. Dent (to whom he always referred in after years as "W. D. D."), a friendship which he valued for its own sake, but still more on account of all to which it led. It quickly resulted in the closest intimacy of all his life—so far as friendship was concerned—for he came to know William Dent's brother Joseph, and in a few years' time it led to his marriage with their sister, Ellen Isabel, all of which things shall be set out in due order.

One matter may be mentioned here, and it is a little sad to have to say that in his subsequent life there is no further occasion to relate anything of the kind. He took up rowing, and it was the one solitary period in which he allowed himself to indulge in any form of sport, or, it might almost be said, recreation. With his strong build and determination of character it is not surprising to find that he became an excellent oar, and rowed in the First Trinity Boat.

Not to deviate from the truth by so much as a hair's breadth, it should be recorded that when on visits to the home of his friend Langley, at Olney, he hunted once or twice with Lord Southampton's hounds. There is a tradition, too, founded on the existence of an ancient fishing-rod, that he used occasionally to try to capture trout

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when at his parents' home near Bray. But such excursions into the field of sport were very rare, and seem to have been entirely forsaken from the time that he took Holy Orders.

There is not much to be gathered of Stamer's life at Cambridge. One little glimpse is obtained in a letter written by him to Archdeacon Sherwen as lately as 1903. In that he speaks of visiting the grave of Bishop Harvey Goodwin, at Crosthwaite, and says, "I went back in thought to the time when he was minister of St. Edward's, Cambridge, and when, with other friends, I made my way from Trinity Chapel to the Church just in time for the sermon, listening to it often standing by the Font."

The last part of his time he "kept" in what went by the name of "Little Trinity" in Jesus Lane—a name given on account of the number of Trinity men who lodged there. The hints that are to be found occur either in the diaries of his friend, Mr. J. P. Langley, or in letters written to his future brother-in-law Joseph Dent, a bundle of which has fortunately been preserved.

From the diaries all that can be gathered is that the two friends read together, walked together, sculled together, and occasionally visited Rugby together.

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From the letters far more is learnt. They reveal a man old for his years, full of deep thoughts concerning the spiritual and temporal welfare not only of himself, but of his friends. They show him to have taken an intelligent interest in the politics, both civil and ecclesiastical, of his day, while at the same time they allow glimpses of a keen enjoyment of social gatherings and other matters which usually count for much in the life of an undergraduate. Through all the letters there runs the current of lovingkindness, which went so far towards the perfecting of his character throughout his life. The one impression to be gleaned from the letters which is not altogether satisfactory, is that in spite of his friends, and in spite of his successful oarsmanship, he was never absolutely happy in or satisfied with his Cambridge life. But one or two of the letters shall be given to speak for themselves.

“ Beauchamp, Bray, Co. Dublin,

Dec. 31st, 1851.

My dear Dent,

.

My best wishes to you and W. D. [William Dent] that you may both have a happy New Year, and many of them. I don't exactly know how

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things have been going with you, but I do not fancy that I shall be doing wrong if I hope that every successive year may find you happier and jollier than the preceding. . . .

Well, I find that W. D. has been 'filing an information' against me for geologising! I am aware he has a very poor opinion of me when he sees *me* even cutting the boats to pursue my newly adopted study. But it affords me great amusement, and I would advise anybody else who is in want of a gentlemanly occupation (notwithstanding the chance of soiling one's fingers) to engage in geological investigation. I hear you laugh!

By the way, do you remember what we were about this very time last year, 11.45 p.m., December 31st? How old Mac. hung out supper, and his guests were Blomfield and Baldry, Cresswell and you and I? Just about this time Blomfield opened the window, and we heard the Bells of St. Mary's ring the old year out. How refreshing it is to think over old times! There are *no* Bells in this country, and not a single cheering sound greets my ear at this moment; but yet I feel great pleasure from the recollections of last year, and almost fancy I hear those old Bells ringing now. Ah! and do you remember you and I were strangers to each other then?

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Well, never mind, we're none the worse friends for that now, eh ? . . .

.

I hope W. D. gave you a correct account of our T. B. C. [Trinity Boat Club] supper. He will, I am sure, testify that it was not 'that scene of drunkenness and debauchery' which you imagine. You ask about the Bachelor's Ball. . . . I am thinking of going to it, as I have got to know some people who are likely to be there.

I really must draw this epistle to a conclusion, which has far transgressed the limit I had assigned to it at the beginning. I won't flatter you by saying how irresistibly I was led on by the extreme pleasure of holding a little chat with you. My best love to W. D. and with my best wishes,

Believe me,

Yr. very sincere friend,

L. T. STAMER."

" *Beauchamp, Jan. 29th, 1852.*

My dear Dent,

.

Many thanks for your kind encouragement to me to read hard this year ; you could not prove

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yourself my friend in a greater degree than by urging me on to exertion in this particular. You know well that I don't want any to fix my interests on the Boats ; but I regret to say I have been very idle last Term, and a word of advice comes most seasonably from you. . . .

I am glad to hear you have had some gaiety this Winter, I do not imagine it will do you any harm. Whatever may have been the extent to which I dissipated towards the end of Term, this I know, that I have had more than an equivalent amount of seclusion since I came here. However, I have profited by it, and I can show a good share of Classical reading got through in the time. I *do* wish you could have dropped in upon us unexpectedly—I'll answer for it you would have got a hearty welcome. . . .

I assure you I am the best of friends with ——. I feel that he is still a mere child, and tho' he often vexes me, yet I am only too happy to forget it all, hoping that I may be of service to him. And, indeed, he bears my advice very well.

Adieu, and with best regard to W. D. D.,

Believe me, yr. very sincere friend,

L. T. STAMER."

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“ 22 *Promenade Villas, Cheltenham,*

June 29th, 1852.

My dear Dent,

I conclude that you are once more settled at home after your wanderings abroad. . . .

I will not put your modest feelings to the blush by repeating all I have been told as to the improving effect of a more enlarged acquaintance with the world upon you. This I know, that however informed a man's mind may be previously, or however refined his manners, an insight into foreign life and manners and scenes cannot fail to have a most beneficial influence.

You allude in your Letter to having criticized in an impartial spirit the wonderful and unaccountable Roman Catholic religion. I am sure you will bear me out when I say that no one can go into countries where it is the *State* religion, and not feel more and more from experience its degrading tendency; nor return home without having his Protestant feelings deeper and deeper rooted in his heart.

I shall not be sorry when my Cambridge life is over. I wanted you or some good angel to keep me straight last term, and to prevent me from belying by any inconsistencies what I am wont to speak of as the proper line of conduct. I did not

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know it before, but I fear I am easily led away. I trust that when I leave College I shall subside to a more consistent level. . . .

I do trust the country will return a Parliament favourable to Lord Derby. It's the last time we shall have it in our power to enjoy a Conservative Government. If Lord Derby goes out, why then we shall have Lord John and Cobden shaking hands, and then good-bye to our old institutions. You see it's not so much a question of cheap bread or the contrary; the most enthusiastic protectionists are giving up the idea of imposing a duty on corn. It would be impossible. The great secret in supporting Lord Derby is that he will support *the Church*; and, tell me, what is more in need of it at this very time? 'Les sages entendent à un demi mot,' and you will see what I mean already if you are not too tired to give it a thought. . . .

Believe me,

Your's very faithfully and sincerely,

L. T. STAMER."

The first part of this letter is rather remarkable in view of the fact that the writer's experience of foreign parts lay in the days of his childhood, and that, with the exception of a few days in Paris on his honeymoon, he never afterwards went abroad.

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This letter, with several others, was written from the house in Cheltenham which had been taken by his father and mother as a change from their home at Beauchamp.

“ 22 Promenade Villas, Cheltenham,

August 1st, 1852.

My dear Dent,

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I agree with you what a melancholy fact it is that Elections cost so much money, and that landed Proprietors should exercise such an undue influence over their Tenants. You could not have a more glaring case of family or territorial influence than in this very Town and in the County of Gloucester itself. Here they have, ever since they received the franchise, been subject to the nominee of Lord Fitzhardinge. ‘How does his Lordship benefit you?’ say I. ‘Why, he keeps his hounds here,’ is the reply; and so the Earl’s Staghounds send a representative to the High Court of Parliament. Well, so far we agree in deploring the degraded state of the elective franchise; we differ on the means of correcting it, although I can propose none, nor have heard any yet proposed to meet the exigency save what I see contained in advanced education and the growing independence

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of the times. The stringent clauses of the Bribery Act show into what interminable ramifications the evil is known to have crept. But I think our best men have given it as their opinion that the Ballot would be no efficient remedy. Dismissing as unworthy of a moment's consideration the cry that it is "un-English" (as though that would be any argument against it if it were a good sound measure), look at the effects of secret voting in the characters of the French and Germans, and the Americans; does it give any degree of uprightness and integrity to their elections which is not procured by our own, bad as they are? Would not the system of protecting the voter from the rancour of the opposite party occasion, wherever there was the tendency to it, duplicity and underhand dealing to an untold extent? These and many others are the evils which suggest themselves to my mind as likely to ensue upon the adoption of such a course—evils we allow to exist in the present system. Is it not, then, a question of which is the least objectionable of the two?

Far more nearly do we consent in our view of the Church. I really feel with you that it lies with her ministers to uphold her in her Apostolic purity, and guard her against the errors of the Church of Rome: and further that they can do more of

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themselves to improve and guide her sons than all the legal enactments that could be devised. But still, so long as the Church and State of this kingdom are united (and I trust they may never be dissolved), so long do I think it to be wished for that we should have those in power who will lend their assistance to support the Church from without. Such a man I consider Lord Derby, without examining into his motives, which may be, and I trust are, sincere, notwithstanding all that is said to the contrary.

You speak of *schools* being the stronghold of a clergyman in his parish ; of course, then, the more power he has over these, and the more they are under his control, the better he will be able to use them to his purpose of gaining a place in the hearts of every family in his parish. Now we know Lord Derby *did*, before the close of last session, bring forward and carry a Bill which, when it comes into operation, will throw the schools far more under the superintendence of the Rector. He also holds forth promises of better things still, and I cannot say I look without some fears upon the cry which has been going all through England this last month about Church rates, which the Whigs will endeavour to abolish, and the present Ministry will do their best to maintain. So desirable do I look upon it

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that the Government of this country should look with a favourable eye upon its religion.

You say W. D. has told you that I am going to take orders : so it is, and I have long purposed doing so. But I have no intention of going to Wells after leaving Cambridge : here we agree entirely, for I have all along looked upon it as an unnecessary course to pursue. . . .

No :—my plan will be to get some good judicious man—Blunt, for example, whom I know personally and who is my model man—to lay down for me a course of reading which I shall be well able to pursue alone, and I trust that my own religious feelings together with a deep sense of the responsibility of taking Holy Orders will lead me to renounce without a sigh—save that I *ever* indulged in them—the pleasures and wanton gratifications of my College life. If I am mistaken in myself and if I find that my measure of self-denial is so small and sense of duty so weak as not of themselves to be equal to this, I would not for any prospect, however great, allow myself to be ordained. Such are my views on this subject.

.

I shall indeed be glad to see you again : I look forward to returning to Cambridge about the

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1st of October in order to have a good fortnight's reading before the men come up, and to get into regular habits. You may indeed look forward to a very hearty shake of the hand. . . .

Believe me, ever yr. very sincere friend,

LOVELACE T. STAMER.

P.S.—You gave me a very well-merited rebuke for my signature of ‘Yrs. faithfully’: must I say it, that it arose from a fear that you might think me too free if I subscribed myself more as I felt?”

Surely this is a very remarkable letter to have been written by one undergraduate to another. It is full of deep thoughts and of religious feeling, and gives evidence of a foresight as to matters of social policy which was one of the future bishop's chief characteristics. Lest such a letter should leave an impression of a young man of a too austere disposition, it is pleasant to be able to quote one who knew him well at that period, and who says: “My recollection of him is of one with a boyish spirit almost, and such enthusiasm that he carried people away with him and never saw a gloomy side. This, too, with intense earnestness.”

In 1853, Stamer took his degree of Bachelor of Arts. The Cambridge lists have been preserved in

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a book of newspaper cuttings that was made by his mother. In these lists he appears on January 29th of that year among the Questionists, not Candidates for Honours, in the First-Class of the Ordinary Degree, and on March 24th in the Second-Class of the Classical Tripos.

CHAPTER III

EARLY MINISTERIAL WORK

SOON after taking his degree, Lovelace Tomlinson Stamer was ordained to the curacy of Clay Cross, which lies four or five miles south of Chesterfield in Derbyshire. Even in those days it was not a very small parish, and he was the only curate. The Vicar, Mr. Oldham, was very frequently absent, and it was an unfortunate start for a young deacon with such strong views as to clerical duty as were held by Stamer. It is no matter of surprise to find that he could not stand it for long. A passage in a letter to his friend, Joseph Dent (whom, by the way, he had by this time learnt to address as "My dear Joe"), gives an idea of his reasons for leaving his first curacy so soon. The letter is written from Leamington on April 7th, 1854, and contains the following passage: "And now you may like to know how I got here. In the middle of Oldham's absence at Cambridge I

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regularly broke down, and for some ten days was very far from well, although I had to take my duty as usual. This led the doctor to write to O. to say that on his return I must be set free to take rest and change of air. O. wrote to me thereupon assuring me that on his return I should be free for five or six weeks, and that, if I found the work at Clay Cross too much for me, I was at liberty to go at the end of my year ! I may be mistaken, but it looks very much as if he wanted a curate only to enable him to keep his terms at Cambridge ! Well, I came down here on March 22nd, and have been employing the time in reading for Priest's Orders. Last week I spent a few days at Rugby, and to-morrow I go to stay with Langley, and help him through Passion week.

“ Since I came here I have had three offers of Curacies. The most important from Reigate : but I hardly know what to make out of my not having heard from them for ten days. I should accept it certainly, if I can understand my position with the Vicar.”

The negotiations with Reigate came to nothing ; the visit to his old friend Langley, who was curate to his father at Olney, was duly paid, and was fraught with most important results, for it was from there that he visited the neighbouring village

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of Turvey, and found a curacy awaiting him that was quite after his own heart.

Turning to the diaries of the Rev. J. P. Langley, it is seen that Stamer came to Olney on April 8th, and that on the 9th and 11th the two friends visited Turvey together. Mr. Russell was at that time Curate-in-Charge of the parish and wanted help. It did not take long to induce Stamer to accept the offer of the curacy, and he may be said to have been as fortunate in this second venture as he was unlucky in his first.

But meantime he was fulfilling his promise of helping his friend Langley, and the latter remembers vividly their riding together on the Good Friday morning of that year to take service in the church at Hardmead. Things were very primitive in many country places in those days, and it was not long before this occasion that Mr. Langley went to this same church on a Sunday morning and preached to seven people and two starlings! It was the custom in those days to preach in a gown, and Mr. Langley proceeded to exchange his surplice for the gown which hung all ready to hand on the door of the reading-desk. In the meantime, the clerk below said, "*Let us read* to the praise and glory of God hymn No. —," which he did with such expedition

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that he had finished almost before the preacher was ready.

On the day that the two young clergymen visited this church together there was likely to have been no sermon at all, for just as they were riding across a big grass field Stamer's sermon fell out of his pocket ! Fortunately his companion was riding behind him and saw it.

Very different to the primitive state of things described above was the model parish of Turvey, where the Rev. L. T. Stamer took up his work almost at once. He was certainly resident there in a couple of months' time from the date of his visit to Olney. The time of his arrival was an important one to the place, for it was just then that the restoration of the large and handsome parish church had been completed from the plans of Mr. (afterwards Sir Gilbert) Scott, and the cottages in the three main streets were for the most part rebuilt to the great improvement of the health and sanitation of the place. These matters and others of less importance were due to the public-spirited generosity of the two main landowners, Mr. Charles Longuet Higgins of Turvey Abbey and his connection Mr. Thomas Charles Higgins of Turvey House. To those who have read Dean Burgon's "Twelve Good Men," it will be no surprise to

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learn that the church life of the parish was already vigorous, fostered as it was by the former of those two worthies who figures in that book as the "good layman," and who was known to all leading Churchmen a generation or so ago as the first of the High-Church laymen who have since become such an important factor in ecclesiastical affairs.

Mr. Russell, too, the Curate-in-Charge, and afterwards Vicar, of Turvey, was a man under whom it was a privilege to work, so that it is clear that the new curate began his life there under the most favourable circumstances.

The future bishop's own feelings about it are summarised in a letter written by him to Mrs. Russell in prospect of her husband's death in June, 1876. In this he says: "I could do no more than send you a telegram, assuring you of my loving, grateful remembrance of your dear husband. . . . If the end has not come when you receive this, repeat to him the assurance of my love, and tell him how thankful I am that it was my lot to be under his guidance at Turvey. You know how truly happy I was there. Those two years were the least anxious, and so, in one respect, the happiest of my life."

It is no wonder that they were happy years! If

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intercourse with dear and high-minded friends, if natural surroundings of special beauty, if a people who loved and welcomed his ministry, if an atmosphere combining strenuous work with hallowed peace—if these things count for happiness in a young man's life, then no wonder he was happy!

It is well to try to realise in some detail where and how he lived. Turvey may rightly claim to be one of the prettiest villages in the Midlands. It lies north-west by west of the town of Bedford, and is only separated by the river Ouse from the extreme north-east corner of Buckinghamshire. In those days it was usually reached by coach from Bedford or Northampton, though, as has been seen, Stamer and his friend Langley rode over from the latter's home at Olney. Nowadays, a railway passes within a mile and a half of the village, but has, fortunately, been reluctant to disturb the peace and seclusion of the place by a nearer approach. Even the railway, now that it has come, is not of the ordinary noisy hurrying kind, but wanders on from village to village between the two above-mentioned towns, bearing its rustic passengers in a train which has the unique distinction of having its engine in the middle!

Before reaching the village itself the scenery

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becomes charming, owing to the fact that the two parks of Turvey Abbey and Turvey House stand one at either end, and give a special beauty to the approach, whether from east or west. Then the gabled houses, ranking from the Abbey down to the merest cottage, are unusually picturesque, one of the most noticeable being the present post office, which was once a famous coaching inn, and rejoiced in the name of "The Tinker of Turvey."

At the west end of the main street the Church is conspicuous and impressive, and just beyond is the old "Three Fishes" Inn, and the bridge across the quiet Ouse. There is nothing startling in the beauty of the place; the visitor just carries away with him a vision of old-world houses, of gables and gardens, of trees, of a sweet, slow stream, and of a noble house of God dominating and hallowing it all.

No doubt all this helped to endear the place to Mr. Stamer, but there were, as has been hinted, other causes working to the same end. In the first place, Olney, the home of his friend Langley, was only some four miles away, and frequent intercourse was possible. Besides, from time to time there would be old Rugby or Cambridge friends staying there, who would make a point of coming over to

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see "Sam" at Turvey, either at Box Cottage, opposite Abbey Square, where he lived at first, or at the Cot, a delightfully retired little house, with a nice garden, to which he subsequently moved. Two incidents connected with this latter residence are noted in Mr. Langley's diaries. It was here that a party of three friends who had walked from Olney in pouring rain, took refuge, and arrayed themselves in suits from what is described as his "capacious wardrobe." It was here, too, that his friend Langley came to visit him when he was recovering from small-pox—the one remaining in the garden, and the other talking from the window. It was fortunate that he got home to his own house before becoming seriously ill, for he had been with Langley to Northampton, and then slept the night at Olney. In the morning a rash appeared on his forehead, and he returned to Turvey just in time.

Then there was the highly valued privilege of the friendship of Mr. Charles Longuet Higgins and Mrs. Higgins. Seldom has any parish the privilege of possessing such a Squire and Lord of the Manor. A gifted musician, Mr. Higgins played the organ at all services in the church; devoted to the welfare of the people, especially of the young, he presided over the Sunday School; liberal to a fault, he spent

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his fortune on the beautifying of the church and the building of spacious schoolrooms. It was a great matter for the young curate, just seeking priest's orders, to come under the influence of such a man, and to win his warm friendship. How warm his friendship with the family remained, even after his departure, can be seen from letters received by him from Mrs. Higgins after her husband's death, which occurred in 1885. These letters are full of expressions of affection and esteem, and again and again such passages occur as, "It is indeed a long time since you visited Turvey. Oh! if you could in the spring, or better still, in early summer, come and see us all again, how many would rejoice to welcome you." And, "I cannot tell you the great pleasure it gave me to receive your kind letter! It was a ray of light!"

There is also in existence a number of letters from Mr. Charles L. Higgins, of various dates between the years 1855 and 1880, which go to prove the staunch friendship which existed between him and the young curate of Turvey. These letters are full of expressions of religious feeling, as, for example, where he writes to Mr. Stamer in the parish to which he removed, and says, "We think and talk much of you, with a kind wish and hope that you may both be good and do good, and have good. And

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I think it will be so with you, for I know that you look for strength and help in your work where you will be sure to find it." The last letter of all, written from Turvey Abbey on May 7th, 1880, is in a different strain, and tells how, even after the lapse of twenty-four years, the name of Stamer was still beloved in the place. He writes: "When it was made known that you could not preach for us this Whitsuntide, there was a long, low, uneasy, mournful, stomach-ache-like, continuously sustained, uncomfortable wail sent forth, which reached from Picts' Hill to the Bridge!"

Lastly, there were the cottagers in the village, his relations with whom may be summed up in the words of one who knew both them and him, and who writes, "He took to them and they took to him." There are very few of them alive now to tell how they loved and valued him. "He preached so plain"—"He made himself so *very* nice, he did"—such are the kind of recollections which fall from the lips of such as can recall him. One very old woman tells how he used to sit and chat with his watch in his hand, with the chain wound round his fingers, so as not to be tempted to give too large a share of his time to his favourites! Years after he had left the parish, Mr. Munby,

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who became Vicar of Turvey, found that "no name of any clergyman whatever, except Legh Richmond (the well-known popular preacher, and the author of "Annals of the Poor"), was so often on the people's lips as his." Mr. Munby further says: "His excellent ministry had its beginning amongst those lace-making people, and they had all his earliest affection as a minister of Christ, and he loved them to the last. He came several times to Turvey during the time that I was there. In 1870 I persuaded him to come and preach in the Church for the Additional Curates Society, and afterwards he came and spoke most efficiently in the large schoolroom at one of our early meetings of the Church of England Temperance Society. Whenever he came, the simple announcement of his coming was sure to bring everybody who remembered him to hear his cheery voice again, and to shake him by the hand. I do not think he ever came anywhere near Bedfordshire but he found his way to Turvey, and when once he was there, he left out nobody. Once I said to him, when, after a round of village calls he appeared at the Rectory, 'I hope you'll have time to go and see the B——s.' His answer was, 'Munby, I've been to everybody in the place that I know except two, and those I am going to see on my way to the station.' For many

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years he kept up this link with the place by sending presents, usually at Christmas time. These were at one time pretty articles of his famous Staffordshire pottery; latterly, they were mostly small books or picture post cards, but always with some excellent and kindly message, and always directed by his own hand."

There were, at the time that he lived at Turvey, a thousand inhabitants of the parish, a number which has decreased since. It remains to say a word about the faithfulness of his ministry to them. There was, as may be supposed, already a certain amount of religious feeling in the place, partly the result of the influence of Legh Richmond, and partly of that of Mr. Russell and Mr. Charles Longuet Higgins. Curious little reminiscences of the first-named cropped up from time to time. It is, for instance, still told in Turvey how an old woman administered a rebuke to Mr. Stamer. A little boy had been misbehaving, and the curate remarked that he wanted a good thrashing. "Nay," said the old woman, "what he wants is the grace of God."

But although Turvey was by no means a neglected or godless place, it is impossible that some at least of the people could have failed to be lifted higher in their spiritual life by the presence of

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one who not only gave himself affectionately and whole-heartedly to their service, but was himself striving with might and main to make himself more fit from day to day to be a minister of Christ.

For evidence of this it is only necessary to turn to the letters he wrote at this time to his bosom friend Joseph Dent.

Thus, writing from Turvey on April 8th, 1855, he says: "I am glad at the arrival of Easter; I hardly know why, though. Another Lent has passed away, and I have not spent it as I could wish. But I can fancy with what far holier joy I should have hailed this day if, during the weeks that are passed, I had humbled myself more on account of sin, following Christ more closely in His daily path of self-denial, till on Good Friday I had nailed 'the old man' to His Cross. Then, I think, I should have risen more truly on Easter wings, and joined with better heart in the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to Christ for His finished work. . . . Yet I fear that, should I be spared to enter upon Lent again, I shall be no better than before! How short-lived are religious impressions wont to be unless the plant be watered with God's Holy Spirit, not occasionally, if, indeed, this could be, but constantly, every hour, every minute."

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Later on in the same letter, he refers to a gift made to the Church in these words: "I believe a loving heart will be ever bringing love-tokens to its Heavenly Father, and I doubt not that He graciously accepts them as such. I cordially detest that utilitarian, narrow-minded view, which will approve of nothing till it first has discovered some advantage to be gained. 'Cui bono?' Faith and love do not ask such a question."

Certainly his whole life was in entire accord with the sentiment he here expresses, for his generosity was as unbounded as his affection, and to neither was there ever set a utilitarian limit!

On April 20th of the same year there is a suggestion in a letter written to the same friend of some position which his relatives hoped he might soon occupy. This was, no doubt, the living of Stoke-on-Trent, though it seems to have been early days to have considered such a step. Here is what he says about it: "I really must set in earnest to work to read for Priest's Orders; and not only to read but to think seriously about it, and to pray for God's blessing on the step. It *may* lead to some change in my position; my friends seem to have something in their eye for me when I am in full orders, though they have not told me what it is. It would be a great question whether I would leave Turvey at

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present ; I am *so* happy here, thank God. I only wish I could be as good and thankful and earnest as I ought to be."

This occurs in the course of a long letter, towards the close of which he apologises for writing at such length about his own spiritual affairs ; " but," he says, " my dear Joe, you are the only living creature I can unbosom my heart to, and speak of the things which lie deepest ; and it does me good now and then to give utterance to the workings of my mind. If I had a wife after my own heart, I can fancy what comfort I should have in unreserved converse. I really don't think I would have a single secret. She should read my heart from end to end. Meanwhile, dear Joe, you must kindly act her part."

But this duty was not to fall on his friend's shoulders for long.

By this time the Rev. Joseph Dent had become Vicar of Hunsingore, in which parish was situated Ribstone Hall, where his father and sister lived. Lovelace Stamer had already paid him visits there, and had become a friend of his family. In the autumn of 1855 a visit to Ribstone was planned for a few days after Christmas. It was then that the curate of Turvey made up his mind that if he could obtain her father's consent, he would ask his

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friend's sister to be his wife ; a project which was successfully carried out.

Before, however, giving any details of this event, a number of letters written in the summer and early autumn must be mentioned, which contain matters of interest. In one letter he lets fall an expression in support of a custom of which the death-warrant was soon to be signed. "I believe," he says, "the gown to be the proper dress for the pulpit, where the minister becomes 'Doctor,' and should therefore assume the badge of his academical degree."

The next letter, written on September 24th, gives the first news of a serious outbreak of scarlet fever in Turvey, during which Stamer worked hard to relieve the sufferers, constituting himself a kind of clerical relieving officer, and raising a fund from which he could supply the sick with many comforts. An account he gives of the funeral of a child who died of the fever reveals a very tender and almost poetic side to his character. "A poor little girl," he writes, "of seven years old, who was in our Sunday School in good health yesterday week, I buried yesterday morning. I appointed eight o'clock for the funeral. It was such a glorious, bright morning ; the dew lay fresh and sparkling on the grass, the birds sang cheerily, and everything spoke

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of life and health and vigour. A strange contrast with the poor little one, lying cold and still in her last resting-place ! Yet she had woke to a brighter morning than even this I tell you of. There is to be no more night for her : no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. Cannot one join heart and soul in thanks to God for having removed from this world of sin and sorrow one who has not been corrupted by its temptations, nor hardened by its selfishness ? ”

From this same letter it can be gathered that efforts were made to tempt him to undertake work abroad, the suggestion coming apparently from those who had known him at Rugby. He speaks of having received a letter from Mr. Bradley, a Rugby master, who was afterwards Headmaster of Marlborough and then Dean of Westminster, and goes on thus : “ First India and now the Crimea ! Does it not look as though God was giving me opportunities of a more extended sphere of usefulness which I am declining ? And am I justified in doing so ? There’s the question. You will see by my answer that I at least try to justify myself. Yet I hope I am not seeking ease : there is much to be done here, and I work hard to do it. What do you say ? ” Soon afterwards he refers to “ a cheery letter from Bradley in answer to mine to him. He

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quite approves of my view of matters, and thinks my duty lies here for the present. I must try to discharge it more and more faithfully every day I live."

Mr. Bradley had also written to Mr. Langley on the subject, and from this letter it can be gathered that another old Rugbeian, who was serving as an Army Chaplain in the Crimea, had inspired the hope that others from the school might join in the work. Mr. Bradley wrote: "Hayward, that noble fellow who has been working as Chaplain in the Crimea, returns next month to the Army, and is at present sincerely anxious to find good men to go there. He says he was never so happy or half so useful, and it is, of course, a noble field. While we were talking over the kind of men, someone suggested Stamer. I have not the least notion whether Stamer could or would go, but I confess I could think of no one more fitted for the work. . . . This is written in such haste that it may look as if I were ordering him out, which is, of course, absurd. It's only, you'll understand, a purely hypothetical suggestion."

In a charming letter in answer to Stamer's decision to stay on and work at Turvey, Mr. Bradley said: "God forbid that I should say a word in answer. I only suggested it in case you were

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for any reason likely to be loose on the world for a time; even then I felt some scruple at proposing to anyone a perilous task while I sit here at ease."

To those who knew Dr. Bradley afterwards this extract will commend itself as thoroughly characteristic.

The subject of his life as a bachelor crops up continually in Stamer's letters at this period. Generally he laments that he is not married, but sometimes he takes another view, as when he says, "You will see from all this (referring to visits from various friends) that I have been far from being lonely, yet I am such an excitable fellow that I almost think solitude is best for me. When I return to my old bachelor habits I must endeavour to read a good deal."

In a letter of November 7th of the same year there is a great deal that gives an insight into the anxiety with which he was always watching his own work and his personal fitness for it, an anxiety which it may be feared is not common among men so young as he was at this time.

Such passages as the following are remarkable :

"So intricate is the machinery of the human heart, with all its host of motives and desires

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running into one another, or counter to one another, that the wonder to me is that I do not oftener make mistakes than I really do. But then I remember that God the Holy Spirit is working with me and by me, and I try to look more to Him. And I have lately had a lesson that we are poor judges of the hearts of others ; that when we fancy that the seed sown has missed, lo ! suddenly it discovers itself a healthy, hopeful plant in fullest bloom ; and that ‘ more grows in a garden than the gardener ever sowed.’ ”

Again, later, “ I had an attentive congregation, with many men and farm lads, and only wished that my own heart and soul were more earnestly set upon the great work of winning souls to Christ. I think too much of what I do as duty done for so and so. Whereas it is Christ’s commission we bear, and His work we are engaged in. I want to learn to regard our Master as a living person, and not the dull abstraction which our cold, sinful hearts are wont to think of. But all this can never be, without closer communion with Him : I must try to pray more ! Prayer is a powerful lever, if we would only use it. How often have I begun to keep the hours of prayer, and with much profit, I believe, while it lasted. But one thing interfered and then another, and now I have dropped it altogether. Alas ! that I should

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have to say so. And then, as for writing sermons, in consequence of these inward deficiencies I bring to them a heart unwarmed by zeal in our Saviour's cause, and ignorant of the wants, the hopes, the fears, the motives of those I am to address. What can be expected from homilies composed after the fashion of themes at school? I am sure I dare hope for nothing from them, and can only feel deeply humbled and condemned when I think of the many opportunities which I have for saying a word in season, and fail to improve. But I won't pain you with any further confession of my own delinquencies. Excuse my having dwelt on them so long : but it does me good to look myself straight in the face now and then."

Only one more quotation shall be given from this most interesting series of letters from Lovelace Stamer to Joseph Dent. In the course of a letter written from Turvey on February 17th, 1856, he expresses a strong view on the Bill for opening Museums, etc., on Sundays. He says: "You ask about the Sunday question : my own mind is now made up, which it was not before. We have sent up a Petition from Turvey, and I put my name to it in right good earnest. I should indeed be sorry to see the Legislature of this Christian country sanctioning a measure which will do such dishonour

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to the Lord's Day, the observance of which as time to be devoted especially to the service of God and the concerns of our souls I accept as no less binding upon myself than it was upon the Jews. Indeed, if there ever was a time when the Sunday should be kept clear of any *licensed* rival to the House of God it is now, when the claims of business are so pressing, when for six days men rise so early and so late take rest, and eat withal the bread of carefulness.

“ But it is argued on philanthropic grounds, and much is said of poor mechanics, who for six days never see the sun or breathe the fresh air of heaven. How can you expect them, it is said, to spend this, their only day of rest, in dull devotional exercises ? It is all very well for your gentle-people or country-folk to go respectably to your Parish Church twice on Sunday, and sit at home the rest of the day, or saunter innocently about your gardens. How can *you* sympathise with these poor wretches, or give a fair opinion on this question ? I should always suspect these quasi-benevolent arguments. A plain and sufficient answer to them would be, why not legislate for a half-holiday on Saturday ? If these people, as you assert, are overworked, and suffering for want of air and exercise, why should not their employers forego their labour for a certain number

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of hours in every week, instead of taking from the time, scanty enough in all conscience, in which there is some semblance of our recognising God, as a nation? But it is too much the fashion to be scrupulous in giving to Cæsar every jot and tittle to which he can lay claim, but to withhold from God very much of what is rightfully His due.

“Lastly, it is argued, the Sabbath breakers are many: you never will get the whole population to acknowledge their duty to God, and to go to Church, and no doubt this is much to be deplored. But the evil does not rest here. These idlers on the Sunday, having no better occupation for the time which they do not care to devote to God, frequent the public-houses, and fall into all kinds of wickedness and excess. If we offered them other more rational amusements we should avoid these disgraceful scenes, and there would be less drunkenness, immorality, theft. No doubt, if we could choose between Church and the British Museum, Church is the correct thing: but, as it is, the choice is between the British Museum and the Gin Palace.

“Now here I answer, in the first place, I do not believe that the men whose tastes lead them to indulge in drink would be very capable of appreciating what they would see in the British Museum and the National Gallery. And next, I lay

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it down as a general rule that when two courses are presented to me, both confessedly evil, I must decline both at whatever cost. We hear much about 'the lesser of two evils.' St. Paul says of those who would do evil that good may come, 'whose damnation is just.' "

This passage is of real interest in view of the fact that in all social questions the future bishop was invariably ahead of his age. To those who realise this it would have seemed more than possible that he would have taken the other side in the question. But it has to be remembered that at all times and in everything, he put what he believed to be God's law first, and accepted nothing that was not covered thereby. He never fell into the error, which accounts for so many modern mistakes, of putting what is expedient before what is right.

Those who have read these copious extracts from Stamer's letters to his special friend will understand the reason of their being given here at such considerable length. It is a fortunate matter that they have been preserved. From them, far better than from any other source, it is possible to realise what he *was*. Others will tell the story of all he *did*. Others will say what manner of man he seemed to them. These letters picture the very man as he knew himself to be. With the close of his work

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at Turvey they cease. Perhaps, with the beginning of his married life there was no longer any call for them. However that may be, they are invaluable as giving an insight into a life even then holy and humble and devoted, as it remained to the end.

CHAPTER IV

MARRIAGE, PRESENTATION TO STOKE- UPON-TRENT, ETC.

IMMEDIATELY after Christmas, 1855, Mr. Lovelace Stamer went to Ribstone, the home of his friends, the Dents, for a visit, and there are passages in his letters to Mr. Joseph Dent which make it plain that the occasion might be of some greater importance to him than usual. As has been said before, he then made up his mind that if he could succeed in winning her, he would make Miss Dent his wife. He took his great friend into his confidence and told him plainly that he would not prosecute his suit unless Miss Dent's father was willing that he should do so. This matter seems to have been quickly settled to his satisfaction, and the engagement took place in the spring of 1856.

It then became necessary for him to look for a sphere of work where he might obtain a suitable house to which to take his bride. The Bishop of Ely, in whose diocese Turvey was situated, inter-

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ested himself in the matter, and on August 20th had an interview with Mr. Stamer, in the course of which he offered him the charge of the living of Long Melford, an important place on the borders of Essex and Suffolk with a population at that time of 2600 persons. In offering the post, the bishop used the following words: "I can only say, sir, that as curate of Melford, and residing in that house [the Rectory], you would have a position and eminence which you would not derive from many livings."

The explanation of these words lies in the fact that the living of Melford was sequestrated, and therefore the curate-in-charge would have the use of the Rectory house. This would be just what Mr. Stamer wanted, but he was apparently reluctant at first to undertake so responsible a position as the sole charge of nearly three thousand souls. The bishop was, however, bent on securing him for the parish, and approached an old friend of Mr. Stamer's, the Rev. L. F. Page, incumbent of Woolpit in the neighbourhood of Melford, with a view to persuading him to reconsider his refusal. "To say the truth," wrote the bishop, "I consider him much the best suited of all the candidates to the appointment."

After some correspondence between Mr. Page

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and Mr. Stamer, the latter wrote to the bishop to withdraw his refusal, and on August 27th received a letter expressing the bishop's pleasure at his decision. But this did not remove all difficulties. There were some tenants of the Rectory house, and delay was caused by the gentleman to whom the living was sequestrated being unable at first to give any assurance to the bishop as to the house being available. In consequence of this the latter wrote to Mr. Stamer on September 23rd suggesting another parish with a less population. This living was also sequestrated, and the house, which the bishop described as "quite a gentleman's residence," was all ready for occupation at any time, "for," said the bishop, "the person lately officiating as curate went out and shot the Squire's game—an offence against all propriety and not to be overlooked."

However, the difficulties at Long Melford were smoothed away, and on October 9th the bishop wrote to give Mr. Stamer permission to officiate in that parish, advising him at the same time to try how things went on before being licensed. Of the next six months there is little to record. The young clergyman who had commended himself so highly by his work and devotion at Turvey was not likely to be less zealous when in a position where

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the spiritual welfare of the parish depended on himself alone. He made friends with all at Melford, just as he had done at Turvey, among the chief of whom were Captain and Mrs. Bruce of Kentwell Hall, who showed him unvaried kindness and supported him loyally. It is interesting to notice that one of his first public acts at Melford was to preside at a meeting of the Bible Society, which to the end of his life had his cordial support.

On April 16th, 1857, Mr. Stamer's engagement to Miss Dent, which had lasted just a year, was brought to a happy termination by their marriage. The ceremony took place in the parish church of Hunsingore, close to Ribstone Hall, and was performed by the Rev. Joseph Dent, who was at once the bride's brother and the bridegroom's bosom friend. The newspaper account of the occasion mentions that the bridesmaids were dressed in white muslin with blue cloaks, "and were not the least lovely appendages of the scene," a description which throws a light on the fashions of the Mid-Victorian age. It is interesting to notice among the letters of congratulation on his marriage received by Mr. Stamer one signed "Ever yours, J. B. Lightfoot" (afterwards Bishop of Durham), who was one of the many friends made at Cambridge.

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After a short honeymoon, of which a fortnight was spent in Paris, Mr. and Mrs. Stamer went into residence at Long Melford, and the next event of importance was the news of the death of his uncle, Mr. Tomlinson, the Rector of Stoke-upon-Trent, which reached him in the following October. This event altered the whole course of his life, for it was followed by a letter from Mr. F. Tomlinson, the patron of Stoke, offering Mr. Stamer that valuable and important living. This letter arrived on December 25th, and may be said to have contained one of the handsomest Christmas presents on record !

Not much time was lost in negotiations, for on January 27th the new Rector was instituted to the cure of souls of the parish of Stoke-upon-Trent by Bishop Lonsdale at Eccleshall Castle, which was then the residence of the bishops of Lichfield. It was not, however, till the 16th of March that the move from Long Melford took place, and meantime an interesting domestic event occurred which was recorded in the newspapers of the day in these words : " On January 29th, at the Rectory House, Long Melford, the wife of the Rev. Lovelace Tomlinson Stamer, Rector of Stoke-upon-Trent, of a daughter."

On the next day, March 17th, the young Rector,

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then twenty-eight years of age, was inducted into the possession of all the rights and possessions of the Rectory, which were at that time of great value and importance. To counterbalance this fact, it must be confessed that Stoke would not have been an attractive place of residence to most people even at that time. To Mrs. Stamer, whose life had mainly been spent in a lovely part of Yorkshire, the surroundings must have appeared a little depressing, even though the neighbourhood was not so thickly built over as it is at present. Still, even then, the Potteries were of considerable extent, and some of the principal factories were in Stoke. This alone need not have been any drawback, but no one can visit this district without being impressed with the gloomy monotony of the rather mean streets and the absence of any buildings of architectural beauty. It is difficult to help feeling, when looking at some exquisite piece of china from Minton's, Copeland's, or some other noted pottery, how strange it is that it should have had its birth and been brought to its perfection of beauty in such surroundings.

The new rector, however, would have felt none of this. From his earliest years he had spent many happy weeks at Cliff Ville, his grandfather's house close by, and had learnt to love the place. It was,

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in a sense, a home-coming for him, and his affection for the town and people beautified all that was depressing, and dispersed by its warmth the sometimes gloomy atmosphere.

It is true that for some years he had to make his home in what was called the Old Rectory, a house of which the real name was Stoke Hall, it being the Manor House of Penkhull with Boother, there being no such township as Stoke-upon-Trent at that time. This house was in a very different position from that of Cliff Ville, which was where he had been accustomed to stay as a boy, and lacked the view and fine air which made the latter a desirable residence.

There, however, Mr. Stamer established himself, his wife, and his baby daughter, and there the three next children (two sons and a daughter) were born. A new chapter must be devoted to the beginnings of his work as Rector of Stoke.

CHAPTER V

EARLY YEARS AT STOKE-UPON-TRENT

SOME description of the new Rector's appearance when he arrived at the scene of his labours will help to fill in a picture of the new era of church work which he inaugurated at Stoke-upon-Trent. One who remembers him at that time writes that he was "as fine an Englishman as could be seen. He had a broad head and clear complexion, and wore side whiskers only. He was strong and broad in body, with the limbs of a giant." No wonder that he made an impression upon his new parishioners!

It is always said that it is some advantage to a new-comer to have a clean slate upon which to write. In one respect, at all events, this was Mr. Stamer's lot, for his uncle, the former rector, had very seldom officiated in his church.

Two of the short memoirs which were collected and published by the present Rector of Stoke, shortly after the Bishop of Shrewsbury's death,

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give pictures of the state of affairs to which Mr. Stamer (as he then was) succeeded, and these pictures are so graphic that nothing better can be done than to quote them verbatim.

The first is by Canon Macaulay, an old college friend, who in fulfilment of a dream of Trinity days went to be his first curate. He writes as follows : " The parish, owing to special circumstances, had for some time lain under a dead weight of disadvantage. There is no need to do more than recall the bare fact without dwelling upon it. To remember it, however, is needful, if we are to appreciate justly the task that lay before ' the New Rector.' The Parish had had no chance to take any step onward in that first stirring of new life which had already begun to touch the Diocese and the Church at large. It is doubtful, indeed, if within the Parish, as it then was, there was any desire for work moulded upon fresh and more vigorous lines. . . .

" If any still linger in Stoke who can remember ' the beginning of things ' under the New Rector, they will admit that he succeeded to a heritage of no small difficulty, requiring no small amount of judgment, tact, and patience. Words of welcome on family grounds, parishioners with kind hearts ready to be friends and to form social ties—these

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things were not wanting. But, withal, there were not wanting also anxious forebodings and timorous doubts in the hearts of the best of friends."

The other picture is drawn by Mr. Charles Lynam, of Stoke, and has special reference to the parish church and its arrangements. He says :

"Between the years 1820 and 1830 that ancient relic (the Old Church) disappeared with all the history it told of the Parish and its people, and in its stead the present Church was erected. This, as it left the builders' hands, was considered a perfect type of Church Architecture and Taste, and, it might almost be said also, of Church doctrine then prevalent. In plan it was, as now, a quadrangle without interruption of its floor except by the pillars supporting galleries on the north, south, and west sides. The western gallery accommodated the Sunday School children and the organ and choir in front thereof. . . .

"In the Chancel there were no seats, but both the galleries and body were filled with pews, some of them at the east end, square shaped with spring cushions to the seats and embroidered linings within the fastening doors. At the west end of the south side were what were known as seats for the poor, which were free: the others being

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appropriated with fixed rents according to their position. . . .

“The pulpit stood a few feet west of the Chancel arch on the centre line of the Church, and was the feature of the first importance. It was of three storeys in height : first, above the floor, the seat for the Parish Clerk ; then, above this, the reading desk, accommodating two ; and at the top the preacher’s place, whence he commanded a sight of almost every seat in the Church ; the Altar, on the other hand, being obstructed from most positions.”

So far, then, as Church life was concerned, Mr. Stamer was met with what must have seemed serious obstacles—an apathetic people and a church unsuited for the best kind of worship. But it would have taken more than this to daunt his courage and enthusiasm. It is exceedingly interesting to see how, at the outset of what was to prove the most important work of his life, he met his difficulties. He was possessed of three qualities, each of which had its full share in the success that met his efforts. These qualities were wisdom, lovingkindness, and an insatiable appetite for work. It is true that it might naturally be supposed that his family connection with the place would have proved sufficient to smooth all obstacles

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from his path. But this was not really the case, and he owed far more to the sterling worth of his own character than to the Tomlinson influence.

To speak first of his wisdom. In so young a man, and one too with a considerable strain of Irish blood in his veins, the tact and judgment exercised from the very start was wonderful.

“To give confidence as a friend,” says Canon Macaulay, “before alarming as a reformer was certainly the Rector’s motto.” This is borne out by Mr. Lynam in the following words: “The new Rector’s estimate of what was incumbent upon him in relation to the vows of his ordination did not agree with the practice of the past, and his mind was given to change in the direction of additional services of a devotional character, but if ever man lived who possessed a cautious outlook, it was the newly appointed young Rector of Stoke, and no one could be more considerate towards the susceptibilities of others than he. . . .

“The Rector, whatever his own opinion might be, was never known to force it upon his people against their will. All the circumstances that attended the various changes brought about during one incumbency can hardly be realised at the present day, but those whose time goes back to the periods themselves, and whose memories serve to

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tell of the difficulties, disagreements, differences, and law suits attending the progress of events, know well how it was that the gentle, courteous, and considerate demeanour of the Rector throughout them all won acquiescence and finally accord amongst the congregation and those in authority. It certainly was his broad-mindedness and nervously anxious considerateness for the opinions and feelings of others that swayed the churchpeople of Stoke to fall in with the varied wishes of the Rector through many years and on numberless occasions."

In one particular he showed a wisdom which many new incumbents would do well to imitate. It is recorded of him that in furtherance of such changes in the Church services, etc. as were in his mind, a meeting of the parishioners was called, not only at the time of the first proposed alterations, but at every subsequent occasion of the kind up to the time of his leaving Stoke.

One change he did indeed make entirely on his own responsibility. It was not long after coming to Stoke that he discarded the black gown in the pulpit for the surplice. He stated that he considered this a matter which concerned himself alone, and it is chiefly interesting as showing how his desire to conform with what was becoming a usual Church custom had in a very few years

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altered his opinion as expressed in a letter from Turvey which is given in a former chapter.

But it was not only in matters ecclesiastical or parochial that his wisdom was recognised. It was not long before he was consulted by persons of all sorts in the town. Money troubles, family difficulties, matters of local concern, were frequently brought to him for his counsel, and there is no doubt that his reputation for wisdom helped very greatly to make his reforms acceptable. In the services of the Church he at first made little or no change. Thus in his first printed notice of the arrangement of services, which is still in existence, it is to be observed that for a time he adhered to a monthly Celebration only, and that at the midday service. This is a strong example of his cautious beginnings. On the other hand, there was one change which he brought about as quickly as possible. He could not stand the old three-decker blocking the centre of the Church and hiding the Altar from sight. So it was agreed to cut it down to the size of an ordinary pulpit and to place it at the corner of the chancel arch, instead of right in the middle. Canon Macaulay tells a good story of a devout parishioner who could not see the preacher quite so easily from his seat in the gallery, and, meeting the curate one day on his rounds,

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assailed him with the words, "Young man, don't you know 'Thy teachers should not be removed *into a corner*, but thine eyes should see thy teachers'?"

Of the second quality that helped him to win over his people, viz., his lovingkindness, much might be written and much will crop out from time to time in these pages. An Englishman of the truest type, direct, tenacious, and possessed of an abundance of common sense, he was at the same time of such an affectionate disposition that he rapidly became bound up in the family interests of great numbers of his people. Hundreds of letters still exist which he wrote to friends, and in most of them he shows by his inquiries an intimate knowledge of and care for each member of the family down to the youngest child.

One of the means by which he found his way into the hearts of his people was his interest in the children, an interest which it will be seen led him to devote much time and trouble to the management of the schools in every place with which he had to do. But from the very first nothing which affected the welfare of his people was too small for him to notice and to help with. Again and again the expression is used, "He was such a father to me." "If one was in trouble merely through losing a servant," said one lady, "one told him all

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about it as a matter of course, and he did what he could to help." These sort of things are only said of the men with the big hearts, and men of this sort are likely to find opposition melt away before the warmth of their affection.

The third quality was his extraordinary capacity for work. When it is seen that a man does not care how much labour he personally undertakes, the impression of his earnestness has great influence, and people who may not at first agree with him soon begin to think there must be something in a cause for which a man is willing to give so much. "If you want a thing done do it yourself" seems to have been his ruling motto. He carried it too far in many cases, losing sometimes the gain of interest and co-operation through his unwillingness to let others help him. "Ah!" said a woman the other day, "he was a one-horse shay, was the Bishop"—words which describe him exactly. Plenty of people would have been thankful to lend him a hand, but he would generally rather pull the load alone. This desire naturally led to his overworking himself, and it is possible that had he not taxed his powers so hard they might have lasted even longer than they did.

With these gifts to enable him to win his way, and with the help and companionship of his old

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friend Mr. Macaulay to back him up, it is not very surprising to find that those who anxiously watched the beginnings of the work of so young a man as Mr. Stamer in so large and difficult a parish as Stoke should have rejoiced at the progress he began at once to make. It is remarkable to find Bishop Lonsdale writing to him on June 2nd, 1858—not more than three months after his arrival at Stoke—in these words, “I can truly say that I am more and more thankful for your being placed at Stoke.”

It was not till the Advent in his first year in the parish that Mr. Stamer made any great effort to provide extra services in the church. During that season he took great pains to obtain a number of special preachers of eminence on the Wednesday and Friday evenings. The list contains the names, amongst others, of the Bishops of Lichfield and Capetown, Dr. Hook, Vicar of Leeds, and the Rev. T. L. Claughton, of Kidderminster, afterwards Bishop of St. Albans.

Canon Macaulay referring to this special effort says, “The recollection dawned upon our memory that the new departure was ‘not much accounted of’ in Stoke. They were ‘nice gentlemen,’ but most of them did not ‘preach the Gospel’!”

But even if some were still inclined to scoff a

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little at anything to which they had not always been accustomed, every one had begun at the end of his first year to grasp the fact that the new Rector was a fearless Christian gentleman, absolutely unaffected and straightforward, and determined to do his Master's work with all his strength—in love and consideration for others, but at all hazards to do it.

The experiment of special services and preachers was continued in the following Lent, when an introductory sermon was preached by the Rev. Edward Monro, Perpetual Curate of Harrow Weald. This remarkable man was the author of the well-known "Allegories," and is described on the bills announcing his sermon as "A true Friend of the Working Man." He also had friends among the upper classes, for there are several letters in existence from the Duchess of Sutherland of that period saying that Mr. Monro is going to Trentham and asking the Rector of Stoke to meet him. It shows the anxiety of Mr. Stamer to obtain the most stirring preachers of the day that he should have induced Mr. Monro to come all the way from Harrow to help him in his early efforts to rouse his people from a lethargy in Church matters which had been of long standing.

It was not long before it was necessary to add

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another member to the staff, thus bringing the number up to three, at which strength it remained for some years. When it is realised that before Sir Lovelace Stamer left the parish seven or eight or even more curates were needed to cope with the work, some idea will be gained of the increase of population and also of organisations which took place in after years.

Before concluding this chapter mention may be made of an interesting scheme that Mr. Stamer set on foot as early as the beginning of 1859 for the better preservation of the memory of the faithful departed. It was in December 1858 that an old Wesleyan died at the age of eighty-three in Cross Union Street, Stoke. The Rector had visited him frequently and found him so godly that the teacher almost became the taught. To perpetuate this man's memory the first memorial encaustic tile was placed in Stoke Parish Church by the Rector out of "reverence for this aged servant of Christ," to use words written long afterwards by the Bishop of Shrewsbury.

These tiles became a great feature of the church. They spread like a dado along the north, south, and west walls, and the names include men and women of every degree from bishops down to potters and people in humble circumstances whose example as

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faithful Christians is thus kept alive. No doubt just at first even this innovation was viewed with some suspicion. To-day the very fact of their having been originated by their dear old Rector would make every inhabitant of Stoke cry "Hands off!" should any one attempt their removal.

CHAPTER VI

EARLY YEARS AT STOKE

(Continued)

IT might easily be imagined that a young rector, face to face for the first time with a great town parish, would find himself so completely absorbed by the details of parochial organisation, and the many small cares brought daily to his notice, as to be unable to raise his eyes beyond the horizon of his immediate cure. But this was never the case with the new Rector of Stoke.

Sir Lovelace Stamer, as he may now be called, for he succeeded to the baronetcy in 1860, soon after his arrival at Stoke, had from the first a wide and far-seeing outlook. It will be seen in the course of these pages that he was, as a young man, a long way ahead of his generation in his view of social reforms. But he also had a strong sense of his responsibilities as a minister of the Church of Christ, responsibilities which he felt could never be limited within the boundaries of a parish, or even

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of a diocese. There is a good example of this in the pages of the first numbers of the Stoke Parish Magazine. It was in January, 1859, that he first issued the magazine, feeling, as he says in the preface, that "there is nothing better calculated to keep up a healthy tone in the parish, and to gain support and encouragement for every good work which is being carried on in it, than a perfect publicity on all points connected with the Church, the Schools, the various Associations and Charities, which are set on foot and managed by the Clergy, but for which the funds are mainly provided by the parishioners generally. They have a right to know how their money is spent, and what progress each year reveals as the result, under God's blessing, of the machinery which their liberality keeps going."

It may be noticed in passing that these words afford in themselves a witness of the fact that he was in advance of his time. Not many clergy in those days were willing to include their parishioners, in any kind of way, in the management of parochial affairs, or to consider that the parson was, in such matters, responsible to his people. Nowadays times are changed, and it would be impossible for the clergy—at all events in large parishes—to work on any other lines than those laid down in the above quotation.

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But a perusal of the pages of the first few numbers of the magazine shows at once how wide an outlook was taken by the Rector of Stoke. Again and again a large portion of the space is taken up by accounts of foreign missions and appeals for help. Now it is Capetown, now Columbia, now the new diocese of Brisbane, in which he tries to interest his parishioners.

How many men in his position would have said, "Let us get things in order in our own parish first, and then it will be time enough to think of others." His was the true idea, that a living and growing Christianity cannot limit itself to supplying local and selfish needs.

The Parish Magazine, to which reference has been made, proved to be short-lived. At the end of 1859 it was given up on account of a lack of support, the Rector finding that a large number of copies were left on his hands each month. Probably the place was not ready for it. People had not yet begun to take a real interest in Church matters. But the fact that it was given up is a little remarkable for two reasons, one, that in after years Sir Lovelace always considered the magazine (which was revived in 1874) of great importance; the other, that he was not by any means in the habit of relinquishing any project upon which he had once

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determined. The importance he gave to the matter afterwards was proved by the fact that he nearly always wrote the local portion himself, and was very particular to maintain a high tone both of sentiment and writing. It is said that in his last years, when blindness made him unable to read to any great extent, it was a great pleasure to him to receive magazines from the parishes in which he was interested. These were read aloud to him, and he invariably noticed with approbation what was written in a lofty style, and condemned anything he considered flippant or unworthy.

It was not long after coming to Stoke that the question of district churches and the position of the curates serving them was brought to the notice of the Rector of the Parish Church. How far was he, as Rector, to give a free hand to those who had charge of distinct portions of the parish, and how far was a curate so appointed to be available, or otherwise, for the parish generally? It may be said here that Sir Lovelace Stamer was in favour of the complete dependence of such curates upon the Rector of the Parish Church. He did not favour the idea of breaking the parish up into *independent* districts, in which he was in agreement with Dr. Hook when Vicar of Leeds. In 1859 there was a correspondence on the subject between the Bishop

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of Lichfield and the Rector of Stoke, of which, unfortunately, one letter only exists. This is a letter from Bishop Lonsdale, in which he says with caution, "Thoughtful and experienced men have differed widely on the question whether it be best to divide large parishes into *independent districts*, or to leave them under care of one incumbent with several curates under him. It is a question which admits, as it seems to me, weighty arguments on both sides."

The history of the parish of Stoke under Sir Lovelace Stamer, with its ever-increasing staff of curates, is evidence of the opinion he held, but it is striking to find him at so young an age, and so early in his career, engaged in trying to solve this problem, and seeking his Bishop's counsel about it. As to this latter point, however, there is matter for less surprise, for a strong liking, and even affection, seems soon to have sprung up between Bishop Lonsdale and the young Rector. Frequent expressions of trust and lovingkindness occur in the Bishop's letters, and on the occasion of the birth of one of Sir Lovelace's sons, he wrote, "What an old squire said to me many years ago is strictly applicable to your case—'There can't be too many of a good breed!'" Such a passage occurring in a letter of five-and-forty years ago shows pretty

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well the terms that existed between the correspondents.

The confidence felt in Sir Lovelace Stamer by the Bishop was shown by his appointment, while very young, to the Rural Deanery of Stoke-upon-Trent. In this capacity he soon became a prominent person. In 1866, at the annual meeting of Rural Deans of the Archdeaconry of Staffordshire, held at Eccleshall under the presidency of the Bishop, he read an extremely able paper on the proposed organisation of a Diocesan Synod. His grasp of the difficulties that had to be met, together with his appreciation of and sympathy with the desires of both clergy and laity in the matter, are strongly in evidence in the considerations that he brought to the notice of the meeting. He foresaw the complaint that has so often been made in the years that have elapsed since then, of an imperfect representation of the Clergy, and was strongly in favour of the principle that every priest should be summoned to a Diocesan Synod. He based this opinion partly upon the fact that this was of the essence of every Diocesan Synod from the earliest times, and partly upon no other plan presenting itself which could remedy an imperfect representation of the priesthood. As regards the laity, he suggested that the Churchwardens of every parish should form an electoral body to choose

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representatives for each deanery, and that to these elected persons should be added all Peers and Members of Parliament who should be Churchmen. This is (as regards the laity) very much the system that has been adopted in many dioceses, and serves to show his clear-sighted appreciation of what was likely to be required. At the same time it is fair to say that he was not extremely enthusiastic in the matter. To his cautious mind it seemed possible that the immediate results of a Synod would not be great, but on the whole he inclined to the opinion that it was worth a trial.

It may be noted that, when the Lichfield Diocesan Conference was inaugurated in 1868, Sir Lovelace Stamer's suggestions were not considered feasible. A representation only of the clergy was allowed, and of the laity a number of representatives equal to that of the clergy, with the addition of the Lords-Lieutenant, Members of Parliament, all Patrons of Benefices, and the Government Inspectors of Church Schools.

In the following year (1867) Sir Lovelace Stamer sent the following letter to the Bishop of Lichfield. The letter explains itself, and is interesting as showing his (Sir Lovelace's) position with regard to the ritualistic movement which was gradually coming more and more into evidence.

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"Cliff Ville, Stoke-upon-Trent,
Feb. 1, 1867.

My dear Lord,

At a meeting of the Clergy of this Rural Deanery held yesterday, the question was long and carefully considered whether it would be proper to convey to your Lordship in a formal address our views on the extreme ritualism which has made its appearance, and gained some considerable ground in the Church.

We concluded not to address your Lordship, for reasons with which I need not trouble you, but I was instructed to make known to you in a private letter what were the feelings of the Clergy present. There was, as your Lordship would expect, a unanimous condemnation of what is known as extreme ritualism, more particularly when it was considered as being avowedly the outward expression of doctrines which we believe to be at variance with the letter and spirit of our formularies.

In considering how these excesses could be dealt with and restrained, the majority of us were averse either to legal prosecutions or parliamentary interference. We thought that if the Archbishops and Bishops could concur in an address to the clergy of their respective dioceses, similar to the one they

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agreed upon in 1851, setting forth what in their judgment were the limits of ceremonial revival in divine service, this, while it might fail to influence those who have already committed themselves and their congregations to an advanced ritual, would restrain those who might otherwise follow their example, and at the same time would constrain others, who have neglected the plain directions of our Prayer-book, to repair their omissions and to be more attentive to all the circumstantialia of public worship. We were all alike impressed with the extreme difficulty of dealing with these questions which are now agitating the Church, and I feel sure that our prayers will be offered continually to the great Head of the Church that He would endue your Lordship and your Right Reverend Brethren with grace and wisdom to preserve from all deterioration the pure faith which we have inherited, and which we desire to hand on unchanged to the generations which are to follow us.

Believe me, my dear Lord,

Your most obedient servant,

L. T. STAMER."

In answer to this Bishop Lonsdale replied that he was heartily glad to know of this strong con-

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demnation of extreme ritualism, with which condemnation he entirely agreed. But he added that it appeared to the Bishops that no manifesto on the subject could be drawn up in which they were all prepared to concur. However, he expressed a strong hope that the good sense and right-mindedness of the great body of the clergy and laity would bring the Church out of the difficulty, since "after all, the ultra-ritualists are an exceeding small section."

Of other causes and interests not to be classed as parochial there were many which appealed to Sir Lovelace, even in these early years at Stoke. He was exceedingly fond of printed notices, and distributed many of these to give information about any important forthcoming events. He also preserved those issued by other people when they were of any special interest. All these various notices he fastened into a big scrap-book, which has fortunately been preserved. From its pages can be gleaned a very fair idea of the rapidity with which, one after another, societies, institutions, and such-like, were taken up by him, and once taken up, were supported with his characteristic vigour and fidelity. Thus, in 1860, he organised Anniversary Services on a weekday in October, on behalf of the North Staffordshire Infirmary. The music was rendered

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by no less than seven combined choirs, and the preachers were the Bishop of Lichfield and the Rev. T. L. Claughton, afterwards Bishop of St. Albans.

In 1862 he took up temperance work, and called a meeting in its support, which was addressed by the Rev. R. Twigg, of Wednesbury. In 1863 he began to interest himself in the North Staffordshire Adult Education Society, and arranged its annual tea meeting. In 1864 the Factory Acts Extension Bill, of great importance to Stoke, claimed his attention, and he called a meeting of his Ruridecanal Conference to consider it. In 1865 he associated himself with the Rev. E. J. Edwards, in promoting a Nursing Association for the diocese of Lichfield, with the object of getting properly trained women to nurse in hospitals, parochial districts, and private families.

On most of these subjects there will be more to be said later on. They are just mentioned here to show how widely his sympathies spread, even in the first years of his work in the parish of Stoke-upon-Trent.

There was one bit of work which Sir Lovelace Stamer undertook that was non-ecclesiastical, but which he felt to be for the benefit of his parishioners. This was the office of Guardian of the Poor for

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Stoke. With his advanced views on all social questions affecting the welfare of the people, he was doubtless glad of the opportunities thus afforded him. Of his work as a Guardian there is little record, but on one occasion at all events he did not entirely approve of the methods of the Board. It happened in this way. In the year 1866 the Stoke Churchyard became nearly full, and something had to be done in the near future to meet the requirements of the place. With their usual generosity, the Rector of Stoke and the Patron (Colonel Tomlinson) offered two acres of glebe land nearest to the church as a free gift to increase the churchyard, provided only that the inhabitants of the town would fence and drain the land.

Now the question had arisen at a meeting of the Board of Guardians as to future provision for the burial of paupers, now that the churchyard of Stoke Church was so nearly full. The workhouse was not in the ecclesiastical district of Stoke, and therefore the burials from there could not take place in the ground which had been offered, as that was to be given to the parishioners of Stoke alone. At the meeting Sir Lovelace proposed that a plot of ground near the workhouse should be purchased for the purpose, which proposal was carried. However, at a subsequent meeting the subject was

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reopened in Sir Lovelace's absence, and a speech was made by one of the Guardians advising the postponement of the whole matter, owing to what he called the "mere enthusiasm" of supposing that the money could be raised to fence and drain the two acres offered in increase of the churchyard. In case this were not done, the offer of the land would be withdrawn, and probably a large cemetery would be provided in concert with Longton and Fenton. As may be imagined, the reading of the report of this speech roused the wrath of the Rector, and he sent a strongly worded letter to the "Staffordshire Advertiser," in which he complained that the Board of Guardians had mixed up with a matter which properly belonged to them to decide another matter with which, as a Board, they had no concern, and also that they had been guilty of a practice, which he observed was far too common in that neighbourhood, of unsettling a question which had once been decided by authority after careful consideration.

In spite of the speech made at the meeting of the Board of Guardians, the matter was in the end carried through according to the generous proposal of Colonel Tomlinson and Sir Lovelace Stamer. The Stoke Improvement Commissioners approved of the scheme, and determined that the amount

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needed to drain and fence the land should be provided by a rate if it could not be voluntarily raised, and the addition to the churchyard was consecrated by Bishop Selwyn in 1868, soon after his acceptance of the See of Lichfield.

CHAPTER VII

EARLY YEARS AT STOKE (*continued*) EDUCATION

IN spite of all his interests in matters ruridecanal, diocesan, and concerning the Church at large, it must not be thought that the welfare of his parishioners held any but the first place with Sir Lovelace Stamer. His capable mind, ever looking on into the future as well as to the needs of the immediate present, grasped the fact that, if the whole spiritual and social tone of the parish was to be raised, the great hope lay in dealing with the children. In this matter, as in so many others, he was in advance of his age. It is only latterly that this great truth has been generally accepted. Even now there are those who are short-sighted enough to fail to see that work for children to-day, even if costly, will repay itself by the improvement of the next generation. If a God-fearing nation is what is desired, it can best be attained by teaching the children the fear of God. If it be desired to diminish the pauperism of the country it is with

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the children that the best work can be done, by getting them out of the workhouses that they may start in life with the same chance as more fortunate children.

More than half a century ago the Rector of Stoke saw clearly that if his work was to be worth anything it was with the children that he must begin.

When he first arrived at Stoke there was only one school in existence, a building which forms the main block of the present Central Schools. To anyone who is aware of the extent of the district which this school had to serve it will be obvious that numbers of children must have been debarred from regular attendance, owing to the distance from their homes being too great for small children, or indeed for any children in very bad weather. One of Sir Lovelace's first objects was to remedy this. Probably his ideas on the subject would not exactly commend themselves to a modern Education Department, for they were eminently practical, and cared a great deal more for the sound teaching of the children than for showy buildings and apparatus. So it came about that, sooner than waste time, he got possession of two empty cottages, one in Cliff Vale and the other in London Road, and opened them as schools. This latter house was only available for eighteen months, at the end

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of which time the Rector had notice to quit, on which a printed bill was issued, urging the parents to send their children when possible to the Church School, and promising that a new and much more convenient building should be opened for the purpose on the other side of the canal, as soon after Whitsuntide as possible. Meantime, the same course, though on a larger scale, was followed at Boothern, Mount Pleasant, and the Mount Estate. In these cases the idea of combining a school with a room for services was carried out, two or three contiguous cottages being utilised for the purpose. Thus it will be seen that in a very few years a considerable number of subsidiary schools were started with the result that many more children were receiving education.

It is quite possible that some parents did not altogether appreciate the removal of the admirable excuse for their children's non-attendance at school which they had hitherto been able to offer. There is evidence of this in the fact that on January 8th, 1861, the Rector printed a handbill, addressed to the inhabitants of Boothern, in which he exhorted them, in his usual direct and forcible language, to send their children to school. "Understand, then," he said, "that within a very short distance of your own doors there is a Day School for your

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Children under a Certificated Mistress, the charge for attendance at which is only twopence a week for each child. There is also a Sunday School open to all without charge ; and on Sunday and Wednesday evenings there is Divine Service.

“ Be sure that these blessings having been brought so near to you, you will neglect them at your peril. In the great day of account you can never say that you had not a school at hand for the education of your children, or no place wherein to worship God and hear His word.”

It was like him to speak out in this manner, but it may be further said that few clergymen ever had such a right to speak. Stoke owed an immense debt to him in the matter of the education of its children from the first. The work he undertook and carried out single-handed was amazing. He was everything in one to the Church Schools. At one time he kept the books of five blocks of schools—the large Central School, and that at Mount Pleasant, Boothern, Cliff Vale, and Berry Hill—and furnished the Department with all the returns in connection with them himself. It would have been thought by some people that to have done all this was work enough in itself for one man. To Sir Lovelace Stamer it was just one item—a *most* important one—among many others. And the

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success of his efforts justified the single-handed venture. During his first twelve years at Stoke there were no Board Schools, and the Church Schools became so popular that the Wesleyans gave their school up, and all the children in the place, who went to school at all, attended the Church Schools only.

How did he do it? The answer is "by his personality." He overcame opposition not by killing it by kindness, certainly not by truckling to any man, but by his reputation as a tremendous worker coupled with a geniality towards his fellow-men, simply as fellow-men, which was difficult to resist. Then, again, his far-sighted policy had something to say in the matter. When *all* the children came to the Church Schools he laid it down as a rule—years before it became incorporated into an Education Bill—that any parents who liked were at liberty to withdraw their children from religious instruction.

At the same time he made an immense point of the religious instruction. He was there himself, and he took care that his curates were there. In that, as in everything, he would have the very best he could get and could give. It is not too much to say that to this fact, and to his personal influence, which seemed to be felt throughout the school by teachers

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and by children, whether he was present or absent, the great success of the Central Schools at Stoke was mainly due.

The Rector's visits to his schools were daily—or as nearly so as possible. He personally gave an immense amount of religious instruction. At other times he came, as he was specially fond of doing, to conduct the school prayers, either at the opening or closing of the day. This he liked to call “taking the Children's daily Service.”

It is not very difficult from all that has been said or written on this subject to picture Sir Lovelace Stamer dropping into the Central Schools to see how everything was getting on. The moment his sturdy figure and calmly genial face appeared there would be a general welcome from teachers and children alike, all showing their pleasure by their beaming faces and respectful salutation. He would perhaps carry in his hand an untidy piece of paper, picked up just outside the school door, and would say a word or two about neatness and tidiness, his quick eye at the same time noticing any smallest lack of orderliness, such as a picture or map that did not hang quite straight. He would have a little chat with Mr. Riley, the headmaster, a warm personal friend, and then would go from class to class, speaking to every teacher, and keeping himself in

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touch with their work, and with themselves. Sometimes a child would be pointed out to him as guilty of bad behaviour, and he would always add weight by a word or two to the correction which the teacher had administered.

Mr. Riley remembers his speaking one day to a boy for losing his temper. Sir Lovelace spoke to the lad in the most touching and sympathising way, saying that he himself knew what it was to fail in that respect, and adding that he would remember to pray for the boy when praying for himself. Probably that boy has never forgotten the words then spoken to him—so far more efficacious in their tender sympathy than any mere scolding could have been.

But Sir Lovelace knew, none better, that the children's welfare was not entirely dependent upon the School. He fully understood that if a child was to grow up as he should, and make the use he should of the educational advantages offered him, he must be encouraged in his home. A boy or girl whose parents take no heed of such matters as cleanliness, school-attendance, or decency in speech and conduct, is heavily handicapped. To try to inspire a right feeling in the matter of their children's welfare the Rector instituted annual gatherings of parents, who were entertained with tea and music,

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and heard from him a stirring account of all that was being done in the schools for their children. These gatherings were started very soon after Sir Lovelace came to Stoke, and were greatly appreciated.

It is just possible that some people may think that a man with so much upon his mind, with a strong business sense, and with a certain settled determination influencing his actions, set about his work for the children from a real appreciation of the necessity of doing so, as part of a great scheme for the general welfare of the place, but without any—or at least without much—special liking for or appreciation of children. But this was not the case. Again and again his affection for children is the theme of letters written after his death by those who want to say something of what he had been to them. A working man in Stoke was asked the other day if he remembered when he was a schoolboy seeing Sir Lovelace, and whether he was afraid of him. “Afraid of him!” was the reply, the meaning being clear from the man’s subsequent words, which went to show that it was, perhaps, *when a boy* that he had best learnt to love the Rector.

Just one little story may be told here. Mr. Riley, of whom mention has been made, has set it down as follows :

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“Just about the time the Bishop left Stoke he paid a visit to my house. My youngest little girl, then about three years old, went to the door and managed to open it by climbing on a chair. Her mother was at the moment in the kitchen, and the little one *ran* to fetch her, saying, ‘Oh! mamma, *do* come! There is such a nice old gentleman at the door!’ After delivering her information the child ran back to the Bishop, who was much amused at hearing her message. On reaching the sitting-room I found the Bishop sitting with the child on his knee. It would be hard to say which enjoyed the situation most. Next morning by post the little girl received a story-book inscribed, ‘To my little Chatterbox from her friend the Bishop.’”

To the teachers, too, as well as to the children he was a true friend. He thoroughly sympathised with the arduous and anxious nature of their work. No better example of this fact can be given than the way in which he shared in their trepidation on the approach of examination days. This was specially the case in the old “percentage” days, when the visit of H.M.’s Inspector meant so much to a teacher’s reputation. On the eve of such occasions he would invite the principal teachers to Cliff Ville for a few hours’ relaxation, or would

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arrange for them a ramble in the country with tea at a friend's house or a wayside inn.

In all financial matters he was liberality itself where the schools were concerned. As in most other parochial matters he took the responsibility upon himself. It was seldom that there was any other guarantor than the Rector, and no one ever had any idea of what sums were provided from his private purse. Though Nonconformists made use of the Central Schools, it was practically from Church people only that he received subscriptions, and too much stress cannot be laid upon the generosity he displayed, and his readiness to accept sole responsibility.

It is not given to every one to receive such a proof of the result of their labours as was given to the Bishop of Shrewsbury when in 1902 a gathering of the old boys of St. Peter's Schools (the Central Church Schools) was organised by Alderman F. Geen, J.P., himself an old boy.

The Bishop came from Edgmond to preside, and a hundred former scholars were present at the dinner. When it is stated that of these one was at that time Mayor of Stoke, two were aldermen, and four were councillors, some idea will be gained of the way in which the education received at these Church schools trained men to be able to

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occupy important positions in after life. An address was presented to the Bishop by Mr. Geen on behalf of the former scholars, and in the course of his speech he alluded to "the close personal attention the Bishop always gave to the welfare and life of all scholars, without distinction of class or creed." This was no doubt one of the secrets of the success of the work. Another was the close friendship which existed between him and the teachers, to which in the case of Mr. Riley attention has already been drawn. When the clergyman and the teachers really work hand in hand, with the personal welfare of the scholars thoroughly at heart, the best results are bound to follow. The present writer cannot help remembering a Church school in Shropshire where, fifty years ago, the Rector of the parish (afterwards Bishop Walsham How) worked diligently and devotedly in close friendship and harmony with the master (Mr. H. M. Gwyther). From that school went forth boys who became solicitors, doctors, and railway managers, and one was ordained and gave himself to the mission field. This was just such a case, on a smaller scale, as that of Stoke, and they form with many others the best possible answer to the misleading outcry against Church schools.

Once more it is necessary to point to the width

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of Sir Lovelace Stamer's sympathies. It was just the same in the matter of education as in other things. There have always been many clergy keenly interested in education, but their interest has been largely confined to their Church schools. This was never the case with the Rector of Stoke. It is fortunately possible to quote from a valuable paper which has been written for the purposes of this memoir by Mr. Beach, a retired Assistant Inspector of Schools still resident at Stoke. He writes as follows :

“ There were several groups of Church Schools in Stoke, but I am under the impression that, with the exception of the old Central National School near the Parish Church, all the Church Schools were started by Sir Lovelace himself. He was a frequent visitor to all these schools, as I know from my own personal knowledge, and I may say that he was by no means unknown in the schools of the district. When the first School Board for Stoke was formed after the Act of 1870, Sir Lovelace was its first Chairman, and when it was found that, after all the extension of accommodation in Church Schools, owing to the rapid increase of population the existing schools were crowded, he entered heartily into the schemes for providing adequate accommodation by the building of several groups

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of Board Schools. In the building and the working of these schools he took an active interest, and his anxiety for their welfare was scarcely less, if less at all, than his anxiety for his own Church Schools. As Chairman of the Board he always worked loyally with his colleagues, some of whom were Non-conformists and Roman Catholics, and in the appointment of officials, whether teachers or other officers, he was devoid of sectarian prejudice, and always seemed anxious to get the best persons irrespective of creed or sect. It is very pleasing to me to remember the amicable relations which existed between Sir Lovelace, the Roman Catholic priest, and the Congregational minister as members of the School Board."

Taking this intense interest in the welfare of the children, it is not unnatural to find him anxious as to those who were to teach them. The Church Training Colleges for Teachers found him a real friend, and from very early days at Stoke it will be seen that he took a personal share in much that concerned them. As to this it will be well to quote Mr. Beach again :

"I saw Sir Lovelace for the first time at the Annual Reunion of Saltley College during my first year's residence there. This was in the autumn of 1860. I found from my after knowledge of him

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that he always took a great interest in the College, in close alliance with the late Lords Lyttelton and Norton. I know also, partly from his own words to me and partly by other means, that he took an equal interest in the Training College for Mistresses at Derby. Not only was he alive to the importance of the training of teachers for Church Schools from a general point of view, but he took a personal interest in the training of young men and women whose early lives were spent in his own parish or its immediate neighbourhood.

“One schoolmaster, who became an ornament to his profession, told me many years ago that, having been deprived of his parents at an early age, he could not have entered a Training College but for the assistance of Sir Lovelace Stamer. And, while alluding to this matter of assistance, I may also mention cases of families, well known to myself, reduced from comfortable circumstances almost to penury by death or other painful circumstances, where Sir Lovelace has assisted members of such families to gain a respectable livelihood. Young women, previously educated at secondary schools, have, under these unfortunate circumstances, been placed at one or other of Sir Lovelace's schools at a small salary. They have had no official qualifications, and consequently could not

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be recognised by the Board of Education, but they have gained experience, have been encouraged to persevere with their studies, and in due time have become Certificated Teachers, and have had charge of schools as Head Mistresses."

The practical generosity of such actions as those described by Mr. Beach needs no comment. It was exactly like Sir Lovelace. He knew every one and took any amount of pains to help individuals. He knew exactly whether a young man or woman was likely to succeed as a teacher, and, while in the most kindly and fatherly manner helping them in a time of trouble, provided valuable recruits to the body of Church teachers in Church schools.

Mr. Beach further remarks (to show Sir Lovelace's interest in Training Colleges) that when towards the close of the Bishop's life he visited him at Penkridge they talked of the first time they met at the Saltley College in 1860. "Ah! Beach," said the Bishop, "I used to think you were a noisy lot." Mr. Beach replied that in his opinion the blame lay upon the Principal of the College, who was an old pupil of Dr. Arnold at Rugby, and had followed Arnold in allowing his pupils much liberty. Sir Lovelace at once agreed and said that he was aware of the fact.

In connection with the help that Sir Lovelace

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Stamer gave to young people pages might be written. In the many letters to clergy and others which the present writer has been privileged to read, it is astonishing to find the intimate knowledge he possessed of the children of his friends. Sometimes several years had apparently elapsed since any correspondence had occurred, but his inquiries after "Tom's" school career or "Mary's" studies show that he had all the time been bearing them in mind. He never minded how much trouble he took. On one occasion he went all the way up to London on purpose to remonstrate with a girl friend of whom he heard news which made him anxious. Then, again, a clergyman writes to tell how, when his father died at a most critical time in his young days, just, in fact, when he was going to college, Sir Lovelace Stamer showed a true and loving interest in his future, giving proof thereof by sending a present of money to buy books and other necessities on starting his college life.

But the most touching story in this connection concerns a little boy, the youngest son of one of Sir Lovelace's many friends.

One December day, when the boy was just eight years old, Sir Lovelace paid a visit to his home, and found that the little chap was on the very next

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day to undergo an operation for tubercular disease in one of the bones of his arm. Needless to say the Bishop's (as he then was) warm sympathies were at once aroused, and he begged to have a letter giving him information of the result of the operation and the progress of the patient. A few days later he sent the little chap an affectionate letter and a book called "Morning Light," with his love and blessing. The operation unfortunately had to be followed by a series of further operations in the arm and other parts of the body due to the progress of the same disease. The Bishop's first letter was thereupon followed by many others, the correspondence lasting nearly to the end of Sir Lovelace's life. A number of these touching little letters are lying before the present writer : such as (to quote the boy's father) "have survived reading and re-reading, and being carried in a boy's pocket for months together." It is noticeable that the most worn and ragged of the letters is that which the boy received from the Bishop at the time of his confirmation, nearly six years after their friendship began. It is a beautiful little letter, and there is no wonder the boy read and re-read it. One passage may be quoted : "It will be for you, my dear boy, a very solemn yet happy occasion. Solemn, because God the Holy Ghost, a Divine Person, is

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coming to dwell in your heart, and it needs that your heart should be ready to receive Him : and happy, because you have a great token of God's love Who has spared you to receive His gift, and by this token assures you that He desires you to be His child for ever." This last passage refers to the access of health and strength which the boy had received. Some seven or eight books, sent with the Bishop's love and blessing from time to time, will always be among that boy's treasured possessions.

At least two strictly educational movements require special notice as engaging the attention of the Rector of Stoke in his early years. He was a firm believer in Night Schools. In those days boys left the elementary schools at a much younger age than they do now, and Sir Lovelace did all he knew to induce them to continue their education in the evenings after work was over. The first printed bill on the subject seems to have been issued by him in September, 1863, when he announced that a night school would be held at the Central Schools three evenings in the week under the superintendence of the Clergy of the Parish Church.

The other movement to which he gave warm support was the formation of the North Stafford-

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shire Adult Education Society. This Society appears to have been started about the year 1859, and its object was to foster the work of Night Schools and similar efforts in North Staffordshire. Pupils from such schools were examined annually and prizes were given as a stimulus, while full reports were issued of the number of successful candidates, and so forth. Pecuniary grants were also made to teachers in these schools so far as the funds of the society allowed. From the annual reports which are to be found in the big scrap-book before mentioned, it does not seem that the movement spread very widely. It was most keenly supported in the neighbourhoods of Stoke and Leek. After four years' work the numbers presented for examination were about 130, which in four more years increased to 170, at which point they remained for some time. Sir Lovelace threw much of his influence into the scale on behalf of the Society, and usually presided at the annual meetings.

While on the subject of education it should be mentioned that a little later (1875 and 1876) he was keenly interested in promoting University Extension lectures in Stoke. Here he was met with disappointment; for the attendance in the second year was too small to admit of continuing the effort. This was all the more disappointing as he

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had secured admirable lecturers and the subjects treated were of an interesting kind, such as English Literature, Political Economy, etc. Among the lecturers was Mr. Arthur Lyttelton, afterwards Bishop of Southampton, and among Sir Lovelace's papers is a letter from Mr. Gladstone regretting his inability to preside at his nephew's lecture. As further evidence of the eminent men whom the Rector of Stoke approached in order to further the success of the scheme it is recorded that on one occasion Professor James Stuart gave away the prizes, the Bishop of Lichfield (Dr. Selwyn) being in the Chair.

What is so striking in all this is the fact that with all the time and energy that it must have taken to promote these and many other large matters the personal and individual care of his parishioners never for one moment suffered. He was an indefatigable visitor, and would have been annoyed to think that there was any one in his parish about whom he did not know at least something. If any one suffered it was his family. He had at the end of 1863 removed to Cliff Ville, and there was soon a goodly number of small children in his home. Of them he was able to see comparatively little. From early morning to late evening he was entirely absorbed by his parish, and by the claims of the various

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societies and agencies in the work of which he took such a leading part. Then there were his letters. These, as must always be the case in such a life, increased in number year by year. Then there were his sermons and speeches to be prepared. What time was there for all these? He found an answer to that question by sitting up till the small hours of the morning. It was seldom that he went to bed till two or three o'clock. This also in one way helped to rob his family of some of the pleasures of his society, for he got into a habit of sleeping in his chair after dinner until prayer time came, after which he would once more settle down to his writing. In connection with this habit of sitting up late a friend tells how he once remonstrated with Sir Lovelace about it, who replied that he had formerly been in the habit of lying awake for some hours after going to bed, and that he thought he might just as well be up and at work, as he always had plenty to do. There is also an amusing story told of an occasion when he was to preach in Lichfield Cathedral and stayed with Canon Lonsdale for the occasion. Of course, he had had no time to finish writing his sermon and sat up all night at work upon it. Now Canon Lonsdale was a very early riser, and Sir Lovelace Stamer used to tell how he suddenly remembered this and was overcome

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with terror lest they should meet on the stairs, the one coming down, the other just going up to bed ! It was only a man of Sir Lovelace's vigorous constitution and powerful frame who could stand such a life. At all events, in the prime of his life he must have had nerves of iron.

There is one word that occurs in almost every description of him from every kind of source, and that is "genial." How few people with the strain of such unceasing work and the weight of so much responsibility on their own shoulders would be able to be continually genial in their intercourse with their fellow-men ! But he had a smile and a hearty greeting for all. Many a man walking down a street in Stoke would first be aware of the Rector's approach by finding an arm thrust through his and hearing a cheery, "Well, how are you ?" But with it all there was no forgetfulness of his office. His was a saintly geniality. When their ways separated his good-bye was as often as not in the apostolic words, "The Lord be with you."

It must, however, be stated that the Celtic blood in his veins not seldom betrayed him into a hastiness of temper. He was sometimes impatient if his orders were not carried out promptly and to the letter. His gardener used to say that he did not often come into the garden except to administer a

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scolding. Then, perhaps, there would be hot words used on either side, and notices to leave were given by both parties. In a very short time, however, the little cloud would have passed away, and Sir Lovelace would say, "All this is very silly. We were both in the wrong," and so the matter would be forgotten and forgiven almost as soon as it had occurred.

It is very truly said by one who knew Sir Lovelace well that his hastiness was hardly to be regretted, "as it helped to show more strongly his kindness of heart, and the complete absence of anything like malice or venom in his disposition. It was marvellous to hear of the kindly and friendly greeting which would take place with some one with whom only a few hours before he had had an angry passage of arms. He assuredly did not let the sun go down upon his wrath."

In this he resembled closely his friend, Bishop John Selwyn, for neither man could endure the thought of entertaining bitter feelings in his heart against any one, and each of them made haste to remove the sting of angry words by any means in his power. The friend quoted above adds that Sir Lovelace was well aware of the hastiness of his temper, and obviously as years went on controlled it more and more. That it sometimes flashed out

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even in his latter years is recalled in a letter, in the course of which the writer says : "I well remember his righteous scorn blazing out when I asked him what he thought about a certain Ecclesiastic, high in authority, whose action had by no means commended itself to him. It was a sort of quick volcano with a good deal of Celtic element in it, but soon over. That was the dear old Bishop all over ! No malice : no uncharitableness."

Every one in Stoke, indeed in the whole district, soon got to know and understand Sir Lovelace. If his quick temper got the upper hand for a time, every one, rich and poor alike, knew that an apology and in some cases a compensation would quickly follow. The old sexton of the parish church put this into words in a thoroughly characteristic fashion. He had had a severe scolding from the Rector, who told him he ought to give more time to the churchyard, and waxed very warm in the course of what he said. The sexton describing the incident afterwards said, "If that was put into the pot on Sunday *without a bit o' bacon* it would be a very poor job !"

It may not be altogether out of place to say a word or two more here about the hero of the above remark. He was a very shrewd and witty old character, and many of his sayings still survive. Speak-

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ing one day of Sir Lovelace and his dislike to opposition the old man observed, "Aye : when *he's* up, *you* must be down !"

Again, on the occasion of a parochial gathering Sir Lovelace made a speech mentioning almost all the workers connected with the parish church. The old sexton was standing near to an acquaintance, who said, "He hasn't mentioned *you* !" "No," was the reply, "he doesn't want to cast a gloom on the proceedings."

It was very rarely that the Rector of Stoke employed physical force : perhaps the mere sight of his sturdy form and powerful limbs was enough for most people. One instance of his doing so is, however, remembered. It was on a Sunday, and he was on his way home from his Bible class, his robe case being carried by one of the members. They were just passing through a rather low district when they came upon a fight in process. Sir Lovelace at once went up to stop the men, and found that one of the two was an old Sunday-school boy. This fellow seemed ashamed of himself and was persuaded to go home. The other man, however, who had been getting the best of it, began hustling Sir Lovelace. The latter began by saying, "Go away, my good man : go back, I tell you !" Words, however, were of no use, and then quick as

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thought the Rector's left arm went back and out—there was a big thud on the man's chest, and down he went. He lay there for a longish time, but at last lifted his head and said, "Is that parson gone? By gum! if he'd given me another one he'd have had to bury me!"

The next chapters must be devoted to some description of the work that Sir Lovelace Stamer accomplished on behalf of other great causes, mainly of social reform, which he had at heart.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE COAL AND IRONSTONE WORKERS' PERMANENT RELIEF SOCIETY

ALTHOUGH in a man of Sir Lovelace Stamer's disposition his spiritual work always and of necessity kept the first place, it was wonderful how much time and energy he was able to give to schemes for the social betterment of those amongst whom he lived. The fact was that he was extraordinarily human, in the sense that he cared wholeheartedly for the welfare of his fellow-men. Mr. C. J. Blagg, a Staffordshire layman who had known him more or less ever since he came to be Rector of Stoke, and whose friendship with him had in later years ripened into intimacy, says, "In thinking of the Bishop [of Shrewsbury] as I knew him, one recalls his remarkable influence over his fellow-men, both lay and clerical, and the genuine affection with which we all regarded him. What was the secret of all this? I should say it was mainly due to his own exceptional and complete realisation of the brother-

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hood of man. He might have taken for his motto, 'Homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto.' With him this was no mere theory. It was not only the belief of his head, but the warm and genuine feeling of his heart, and this it was that induced that life of strenuous work for others, and that devotion to duty which every one admired, but which so few can emulate."

No better description could be given of one of the chief forces which governed the life of Sir Lovelace Stamer. It had been there from the first : it was one of the secrets of his success in his early ministry at Turvey and elsewhere. It became more vigorous yet when he returned to the Staffordshire people, among whom he had spent so much of his childhood, as Rector of Stoke.

It must not be thought that the population round Stoke consisted entirely of potters. Coal-miners and iron-workers were numerous, and the hazardous lives of many of these men appealed strongly to the sympathies of Sir Lovelace Stamer. Early in the sixties a terrible accident occurred at the Hartley Colliery, in the south-east of North-umberland. The whole country was stirred by the disaster, and a large Relief Fund was raised. So large a sum was provided that after doing all that was necessary at the time a surplus remained, which

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was used to start a *permanent* Relief Fund. This was the first of its kind. All that had hitherto existed were benefit clubs, which broke up annually, and were practically useless in the emergency caused by a big disaster. The action thus taken in the North of England no doubt inspired the Rector of Stoke with the idea of following their example when the occasion offered.

He had not long to wait. On December 13th, 1866, there was a terrible explosion at the Talk o' the Hill Colliery, in North Staffordshire. Relief was needed at once for thirty-five widows, eleven parents, four dependents, and seventy children, all of whom were left destitute. Two men came forward at once to raise the necessary fund. One was Sir Lovelace Stamer, and the other Sir Smith Child, who had previously represented North Staffordshire in Parliament. By their joint endeavours, the large sum of £16,760 was raised, an amount that proved sufficient to meet the requirements of the case.

Now it so happened that on the same day as the explosion at the Talk Colliery, an accident occurred at the Oaks Pit in Yorkshire. The double disaster caused the Lord Mayor of London to set on foot a Mansion House Fund for the relief of the sufferers in both places. When, however, it was realised

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that sufficient money had been raised in Staffordshire for the immediate relief of the destitute at Talk o' the Hill, the Lord Mayor declined to give them any portion of the Mansion House fund. Sir Lovelace Stamer at once wrote an expostulatory letter, and followed it up by a personal interview with the Lord Mayor, when he explained to him that what they wanted to do in North Stafford was not only to be able to meet immediate requirements, but to start a *permanent* Miners' Relief Society. On the strength of his representations £3000 was voted by the Mansion House Committee in aid of the Talk o' the Hill fund. This £3000 formed the nucleus of the North Staffordshire Coal and Ironstone Workers' Permanent Relief Society, which was started in 1870 and has gone on ever since.

The first President of the Society was Sir Smith Child, who was succeeded in 1886 by the Marquis of Stafford, who, as Duke of Sutherland, still occupies the position. Sir Lovelace Stamer was one of the Trustees, and was Chairman of the Committee from the first until the year of his death, i.e. for some thirty-eight years. During the whole of this time he is said to have only missed one annual and not more than six quarterly meetings.

The start of the Society was not particularly encouraging. A part of the working was to consist

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in a payment by colliery proprietors of 20 per cent on the deposits of men in their employ, and this may have alarmed the masters, and prevented their recommending the Society to the men at the beginning. Anyhow, the scheme was not very heartily taken up either by employers or employees, and for some time it made very little progress, with the result that Sir Smith Child proposed that the Society should be broken up. Fortunately, however, braver counsels prevailed. At the eighth annual meeting, held at the Free Library, Stoke-upon-Trent, on Easter Monday, April 22nd, 1878, Archdeacon Sir Lovelace T. Stamer presiding, the Chairman thus expressed his disappointment at the slow progress the Society was making. He said: "The Committee regret that they are unable to report any progress made by the Society during the past year. The number of Local Agencies has not increased, and the number of members has risen in a degree that is scarcely worth recording. This cannot be said to be an encouraging statement, and it is the more disheartening to those who are persuaded of the value of such a provision against the risks to which the colliers of North Staffordshire are daily exposed, when it is contrasted with the growth of societies similarly constituted, and for the same objects, in other mining districts.

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“After eight years the North Staffordshire Society has but one thousand members !”

However, better days were at hand. By the end of a further period of eight years the membership was 5339. This was in 1886, a year noteworthy in the annals of the Society from the fact that it was then that Mr. Frederick Geen commenced his duties as General Secretary to the Society, which position he has fulfilled ever since to the no small advantage of the Society, for it may be said to be largely owing to his well-known grasp of financial affairs that the present position of the Society is one of such absolute solvency that, if all the benefits promised should have to be paid, there would still be a substantial surplus in hand.

But a little more must be said of the growth of the Society, and of Sir Lovelace Stamer's share in its management. It was at the end of the year 1897 that the highest pitch of success was reached. The membership then stood at 9539—a very remarkable figure when it is realised that there were not more than 15,000 or 16,000 miners in the district, and that this was not a charitable society, but strictly contributory. It has been said that one great cause for the number joining was the implicit trust of the miners in Sir Lovelace Stamer.

Then came a sudden fall. The Workmen's

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Compensation Act came into force on July 1st, 1898. In twelve months, over 4000 men withdrew from the Society, content, it may be supposed, with the prospect of relief under the new Act of Parliament. From that time onwards the numbers stood at about 5000.

It was in 1904 that the Bishop of Shrewsbury missed attendance at an annual meeting of this Society for the first time in thirty-four years! Mr. Geen, the Secretary, told the meeting that the Bishop had fully intended to be present, but had that morning telegraphed that the weather would prevent him from coming. He added that no doubt the serious illness from which the Bishop had suffered a few months before, and from which he had not entirely recovered, made it impossible for him to come. He (Mr. Geen) knew that the Bishop's disappointment would be very keen, for there was no meeting he attended with greater pleasure; and he understood the requirements of the members probably better than any other man could do.

It is worth noticing that for a great many years the annual meetings of the Society were held on Easter Monday. When it is realised how heavy the work of the clergy invariably is for a week previous to that day, it adds a little to the value of the time

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and trouble which Sir Lovelace Stamer gave so freely to this Society.

In 1906, when there were almost as many members as at any time, it was determined to give him some token of the appreciation of the members for all that he had done for them. At the annual meeting the Duke of Sutherland presented him with a fine old English chased spiral silver bowl. Upon it was inscribed the following : " Presented to the Right Rev. Sir Lovelace Tomlinson Stamer, Bart., D.D., Bishop of Shrewsbury, by the members of the North Staffordshire Coal and Ironstone Workers' Permanent Relief Society as a token of their appreciation of his untiring labour on their behalf during the last 30 years. Easter Monday, 1896."

A large proportion of the men subscribed to the gift, and that made the Bishop, as he said in his reply, both proud and grateful.

At the annual meeting of 1909, held as usual on Easter Monday, the feeling of the members of the Society towards their founder and lifelong friend found further expression. It was the first meeting after the Bishop's death, and the following report was presented.

" In presenting their Thirty-ninth Annual Report your Committee of Management would point out

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that every previous report issued by the Society since its commencement in 1870 has been signed by the late Chairman, the Right Rev. Sir L. T. Stamer, Bart. The absence of his name from this one will arrest the attention of every one present at this Meeting. To all the Members, as well as the Committee, the death of the late Chairman came as a great shock, notwithstanding the fact that he had gone well beyond the allotted span of life.

“When it is remembered that he was the originator of the Society, that he devoted so much time and ability to it, that with only one or two exceptions he attended every meeting of the Committee during the long period of thirty-eight years, and that he was only once absent from an Annual Meeting; it follows that every one connected with the Society will feel the loss of his guiding hand in the Society's affairs. Those who have attended the Annual Meetings can never forget the late Chairman's genial disposition, his tact, courtesy, and forbearance towards all.”

The Committee further passed the following resolution: “That the Committee of Management of the North Staffordshire Miners' Permanent Relief Society desire to place upon their minutes an expression of their profound grief at the death

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of their beloved Chairman, the Right Rev. Sir L. T. Stamer, Bart., and to state that they and the Members of the Society have lost a sincere friend, whose courtesy and consideration for the well-being of the Miners of North Staffordshire was ever apparent, . . . and that the strong financial position of the Society is mainly due to his untiring efforts and guidance, and that it was because of his personality and the confidence all had in his sound judgment that there had never been any friction or misunderstanding between him and the Committee, or between the Committee and the Members of the Society.”

It was a splendid tribute, and all the more splendid that it came straight from the hearts of straightforward, matter-of-fact business men.

The whole history of this Society throws a fine light upon the life and character of Sir Lovelace Stamer. He was wise beyond his years when, as a parish clergyman not long in orders, he saw the necessity for some such scheme which, involving as it did insurance payments from employers and employed, forestalled by thirty years any attempts of the Government to deal with the question on at all similar lines. He was full of lovingkindness and tactful sympathy, which enabled him to guide the counsels of the Society in ways acceptable to all.

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He was so undaunted by work that he never ceased his labours on the Society's behalf through a long and busy life. Were there nothing else to remind men of the Bishop of Shrewsbury, this Society by itself would be no mean memorial.

CHAPTER IX

TEMPERANCE AND OTHER SOCIAL CAUSES

ONE of the earliest of the efforts made by the Rector of Stoke to improve the moral and physical condition of his people was in the cause of Temperance. A potter is generally a thirsty soul. There is a large amount of dust from dried clay in the very air he breathes, and the thirst incited thereby is (or was) usually quenched at the public-house. It is not, then, surprising to find one of the earliest printed handbills preserved in the big scrap-book announcing a Temperance Meeting to be held in the Magistrates' Room at Stoke with the Rector in the chair. This was in 1862. By 1867 there existed a Stoke-upon-Trent Parochial Temperance Society. Probably this was the year of the formation of the Society, for Sir Lovelace Stamer's card of membership as a total abstainer is dated July 12th of that year, and it is more than likely that he joined as an original member. But he soon found that in order to keep men from the public-house some other

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place of refreshment must be provided for them. He therefore determined to set up a coffee-stall, and gave a bit of glebe land as the site. This proved an immediate success, and in a year's time had to be enlarged. The Parochial Temperance Society had merged into the Church of England Temperance Society, and a committee of that body managed the Coffee Tavern, one of the curates of the parish church keeping the books at first, and the Rector keeping a pretty tight hold on the whole proceeding.

Somewhere about the year 1884 Sir Lovelace lit upon Mr. Massey, who is still manager of the Coffee Tavern (now rather overgrown and known as "the Institute"), and induced him to undertake the managership. At that time there was only a small living-room with a little shop attached. No cooked meats were sold, and, though it was a permanent building, it did not amount to much more than a coffee-stall.

Business quickly increased, and in three years' time it developed into a regular restaurant, with catering of all kinds. Success still attended its career, and it became a source of considerable profit. At this time Sir Lovelace Stamer personally examined the accounts every quarter, and he used the profits for various objects, such as the building

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of the old Church Room, and the starting of a second Coffee Tavern.

But it is not to be imagined that his interest in the place was confined to quarterly financial statements. He was continually in and out, and his genial presence might almost be said to be one of the attractions of the Coffee Tavern. It will be remembered that his home at Cliff Ville was some little way out of the town, and it frequently happened that in the course of visiting his people, or it might be after some such work as addressing the railwaymen or holding a class, he would drop into the Tavern for refreshment. His usual order ran to fourpence, and consisted of a penny cup of tea, a twopenny pork-pie, and a penny Eccles cake. He never allowed the slightest difference to be made between himself and any men or lads who might be having their dinner or tea. He always took the nearest vacant place, without any regard to the cleanliness or otherwise of his neighbours. They still tell many stories of him and his good-fellowship in the Coffee Tavern. It is remembered how he one day got a cup of tea which had been stewing, and remarked, "Tea not very good to-day." The manager hurriedly offered to get him some fresh, but he would not permit it. "No," he said, "I prefer to have the same as every one else."

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His close touch with his fellow-men was continually exemplified by the way he would come in with some of the men of his Bible class or others whom he had met in the street, and would stand them coffee and buns, or sometimes they would stand treat for him ! Once, on such an occasion, a boy came in to have some refreshment, and took off his hat. Instantly Sir Lovelace turned to his companions, who, with himself, had their hats on, and said, " There, that little fellow has given us all a lesson in manners ! "

With all his sense of the dignity of his position, there was never an atom of false pride about him. He would do anything that wanted doing with his own hands and be glad of the chance. He looked in at the Coffee Tavern one day to obtain two loaves of bread to give to some one. The manager offered to send them : " Not a bit of it," said Sir Lovelace, " I'll take them myself. I'm not ashamed of carrying God's good gifts."

A good many of his most useful talks to men and lads took place in the streets of Stoke. His quick eye would see a man for whom he had been on the look out walking ahead of him. In a trice he would catch him up, and linking his arm into the man's would plunge into what he wanted to say. In this way he often advanced the temperance cause

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better than by any amount of meetings. In relation to this a good story is told of how he discovered an old man, who was more or less in his employ, at home one evening very drunk. Sir Lovelace was justly angry, and gave the old fellow notice to leave. Next day, as Sir Lovelace was walking along, he saw the man, evidently on the look out for him, and busily wiping his eyes with a large red handkerchief. The situation tickled Sir Lovelace and he said, "Well, my friend, you seem to be in trouble?" "Yes, master," said the old man, "I'm sowing in tears this morning." "Well," was the reply, "I suppose we must look over last night, so that when the seeds come up you may reap in joy." And the man was given another chance.

Another way in which Sir Lovelace Stamer strove to give a helping hand to any of his fellow-men who were down was by his strong support of the North Staffordshire Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, of which he was a vice-president from its start in 1865. It was owing to his initiative that this movement was supplemented by the formation of an Industrial Home for Discharged Female Prisoners and Friendless Women. As early as 1873 he brought forward a motion at the Annual Meeting of the Prisoners Aid Society for the appointing of a committee to establish an industrial home, but it

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was not till he had perseveringly worked at it for six years that he had the pleasure of seeing the institution founded. On its formation he became one of the trustees, and took the keenest interest in the work, frequently visiting the Home, and, after his consecration, holding confirmations there from time to time. The last of these that he conducted was in 1907, when old age had enfeebled him. On this occasion eight of the inmates received the rite from his hands. For close on thirty years he had been one of the chief, if not absolutely the chief, of the friends of the Home, and what his support had meant may be gathered from the annual report issued after his death. It reads thus :

“ It is while suffering under the sense of a great loss that the Management Committee of the Home present to their friends and supporters the Thirtieth Annual Report. . . .

“ Bishop Stamer, after a life of unequalled service in this great diocese, has passed away from us. One outstanding feature of his varied and self-denying work was his keen devotion to the welfare of the Home. As Chairman of the Management Committee, ever since the death of the late Lord Lichfield, he gave no small share of his very busy life to work for the Home. He loved the place and its inmates, and his work and his prayers have kept

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things going in storm and sunshine for nearly a quarter of a century [i.e. since he became Chairman]. . . . Every member of the Committee feels deeply and personally the taking away of their head. A friend has gone out of the life of each member."

It only needs a glance at the bound volumes of the Reports which were in his possession to endorse these words. The pages relating to the work of the Home, and also of the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, are marked by his pencil here and there, and give evidence of the time and attention which this wonderful man, with his extraordinary appetite for work, gave to these objects in the midst of a life apparently completely full already.

It is natural to find that Sir Lovelace Stamer, with so many thousands of souls in his care, was moved to do the utmost in his power for those who were brought low by sickness, as well as for those whose downfall came through sin. Some few years after his arrival at Stoke, Mr. Edwards, then Vicar of Trentham, and Mr. Adam Clarke, Rector of St. James' Longton, observing with sorrow the suffering entailed among the sick poor by their ignorance of the merest elements of nursing, set on foot a movement for training young women to be parochial nurses. The idea at first was to make the

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movement diocesan, but afterwards it was found better to limit the area to Staffordshire. The first young woman to finish her training was a Miss Roberts, now Mrs. Mellor, and still a resident in Stoke. Sir Lovelace Stamer, seeing at once the value of a parochial nurse in his parish, engaged her for Stoke, where for more than ten years from 1867 she worked single-handed, doing the visiting, the sick cooking, and managing the stock of lending-out things. But "single-handed" is not the right word to use, for the nurse always had the Rector to back her up. Every Friday night he had a list of every patient visited, and talked things over, on which occasions "he was always charming—if everything was right!" He invariably spoke to the nurse of their "work together," and after twenty years wrote to her that he should never forget her long and faithful help, nor that during all those years there never had passed a shadow of a cloud between them. From which it may be gathered that at those Friday night interviews things generally *were* all right!

After Miss Roberts had been at work for ten years an assistant was engaged, and the work has been conducted by two nurses ever since. But the larger movement set on foot by Mr. Edwards and Mr. Adam Clarke developed into a most important

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affair under the title of the Staffordshire Institution for Nurses, better known as the Nurses' Home at Hartshill, Stoke-on-Trent. From the very first it received the fostering care of Sir Lovelace Stamer, and so far as setting it upon a sure foundation and ultimately settling it in suitable premises was concerned he may be called the founder.

No better account of his work in connection with this institution can be given than is contained in a letter from Dr. W. D. Spanton of Hanley, published in the "Staffordshire Sentinel" of November 2nd, 1908. He says :

" Among the many valuable works in which Sir L. T. Stamer took a deep personal interest, that of the Staffordshire Institution for Nurses occupied a very prominent place. In the year 1872 Bishop Stamer became the founder of this institution. Up to that time there was no provision for trained nurses in North Staffordshire : there was, in fact, a strong prejudice against them. Bishop Stamer set to work, and a start was made with five trained nurses—no building was available, as there were no funds ; but permission was granted by the Governors of the North Staffordshire Infirmary to use the Smith Child Wards, which had been recently erected but were not occupied, for the purposes of a Nurses' Home.

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“In 1873, under the charge of Miss Harding, this important work began, Sir L. T. Stamer being Secretary, Treasurer, and Chairman of a Committee then constituted. From that time the late Bishop’s interest in the work never flagged : he hardly ever missed attending a meeting until recently, when his declining health rendered him less able to take the active part he had done for nearly thirty-five years. At the time of his death he was President, and presided at the last annual meeting in March last. His intense personal interest in the work gradually raised its usefulness to such an extent that there are now about 130 trained nurses employed, besides those undergoing probationary training. In 1876 the present Nurses’ Home buildings were erected through his instrumentality and his liberal assistance, so that it has now become one of the most beneficent institutions in the district. I have good reason to know that its success is chiefly attributable to the devoted personal interest taken in it—and especially in the well-being of the nurses themselves—by our late president. . . .

“I should like to add my personal conviction, after a friendship of something like forty-five years’ standing, that a more upright man than the late Bishop Stamer never lived, nor one more self-

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sacrificing in his devotion to the true welfare of those around him.”

The Home was situated exactly opposite to Cliff Ville, so that there was constant intercourse between the two houses, the Bishop and his family being continually in and out of the Home. It was partly due to this fact that Sir Lovelace was able to see so much of the nurses personally. “Many instances are quoted by the older nurses of the Bishop’s sympathy and generosity towards those who needed pecuniary or other help. This was given often with the remark that the recipient was not to be told the name of the benefactor. The Bishop never met a nurse in the familiar brown uniform, wearing the badge which he had himself designed, without speaking to her, and when he had personal knowledge of any kind in relation to a particular nurse he would so refer to the circumstances that she felt herself at once an object of his particular personal care. This kindly interest helped very much to maintain the high moral tone among the nurses.” So writes Miss Wolseley-Lewis, the present Lady Superintendent, and adds that up to the last the Bishop kept in constant touch with the Home by letter, and when any points of special interest arose, e.g. a new scheme for nurses’ bonuses, or a question of enlarging the

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disinfecting-room, he would send for her to go and see him that he might learn all particulars, and have plenty of time to consider the matter in detail.

To this may be added just one fact. From the start of the Institution until the year of his death, Sir Lovelace Stamer *wrote each annual report himself*. When the size of the Institution is considered—and for that it is only necessary to observe that in the Report for 1908 the fees earned by the nurses are given as £5983 17s. 2d.—it is impossible to help wondering once again how the Rector of Stoke and Bishop Suffragan for the diocese of Lichfield could possibly make the time or find the strength to perform duties on its behalf which many a man would consider quite sufficient to occupy him by themselves. In this particular instance it may be said that two motives specially actuated him. One was his extraordinary keenness for the success of any work he had personally set on foot, the other his deep sympathy with his fellow-men, especially those in pain, sickness, or sorrow.

Although the Nursing Home may be said to have been Sir Lovelace's "pet child," he was almost equally energetic on behalf of the North Staffordshire Infirmary. In connection with this institution there is evidence of the impression that he

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made as a very young man of possessing great capabilities, for he was appointed to be a Vice-President of the Infirmary in 1858 immediately after his arrival at Stoke, and without having previously served on the Committee—an honour very rarely accorded.

In 1859 and again in 1860 he presided at the annual meeting of subscribers, and on the latter occasion he urged the adoption of a Hospital Sunday for the whole district. A circular letter signed by him was issued for this purpose in which he made a special point of increasing the interest of all classes in the Institution, and secondly, of the necessity of doing everything possible for “the complete and speedy recovery of the sick.”

Two incidents that occurred in the course of his connection with the Infirmary afford curious examples of two opposite sides of the Bishop's character. When, in quite early days, a memorial to the Committee was presented by the Medical Staff asking for a more adequate building on a healthier site than that occupied by the old hospital in Etruria, Sir Lovelace made up his mind that the demand was a just one. The Committee were sharply divided on the question, and when the majority carried a vote in opposition to the building

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of a new infirmary, he resigned his membership and took five prominent members of the Committee with him. It was just like him. Having determined on what he believed to be right, he would be a party to nothing else and nothing less. The result of his action was eminently satisfactory. It was not long before he and his followers were reinstated in office, and the project for establishing the present Infirmary was set on foot.

The other incident occurred in 1876, and this time it was not his boldness that was exemplified, but the remarkable caution which was apparent in him even when quite a young man. The Rev. Walter Sneyd offered to build a chapel for the Infirmary and to endow a chaplain. Services had hitherto been held in a room in the building, and the offer of a chapel for Church of England services gave considerable offence to the Non-conformists, although it would not have injured them in any way, as they could still have had the use of the old room for their services. Still, it was for the undoubted benefit of the Church of England, and therefore had to be opposed. The Non-conformists threatened that, if the chapel were given, they would withdraw their subscriptions. These amounted to a very small sum indeed, and

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an offer was made by one gentleman to make good the amount if the chapel were built. Sir Lovelace, however, was so much afraid of disturbing the peaceful working of the Committee, and of raising up a feeling of opposition to the Infirmary among the Nonconformists, that he suggested that the offer of the chapel and endowment should be withdrawn. The gift was therefore lost, and it may be doubted whether in this case Sir Lovelace's broad-mindedness and caution combined did not stand in the way of what would have proved of great benefit to the inmates of the Infirmary.

As a proof of the consideration and thoughtfulness for others which were such marked characteristics of his disposition, it is interesting to learn that when he found that, owing to the large number of out-patients, many of them had to wait for a long time before being attended to, he suggested that a coffee-stall should be established for their use. This was done, and proved to be not only a comfort to those for whose benefit it was started, but also a source of income to the Infirmary.

The last occasion on which the Bishop of Shrewsbury performed any public act for the North Staffordshire Infirmary was when, in May, 1904, he formally opened the King Edward VII Home

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for Nurses, in which the Infirmary Nurses were subsequently accommodated.

Of the interest that he took in the Salop Infirmary something will be found in the account of his life and work in Shrewsbury.

CHAPTER X

FOREIGN MISSIONS

ALLUSION has already been made to the interest which Sir Lovelace Stamer took in Foreign and Colonial Missions. Further investigation into the story of his life reveals such an astonishing amount of work done for these causes that a few pages must be devoted to describing labours which many men would consider to fill up a large portion of their time, but which he undertook cheerfully as a natural part of the duty of a Churchman, and without in any way allowing them to interfere with the vast amount of his parochial, diocesan and social responsibilities.

The mission to which he was specially devoted was that of Zululand. His interest appears to have been first aroused by the fact that a friend of his Cambridge days—Charles F. Mackenzie—had been selected to be the first Bishop of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa, and after one year's

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episcopate had died out there. Bishop Mackenzie had been working for some time as a missionary in the diocese of Natal, and had become deeply interested in the Zulus.

It was therefore not unnatural that, when Miss Anne Mackenzie conceived the idea of establishing a lasting memorial to her brother by founding a new bishopric in South Africa, Zululand should have been the locality chosen. A fund for the purpose was opened in 1864, and in 1868 so much money had already been received that a committee was appointed to establish a bishopric in Zululand. Of this committee Sir Lovelace Stamer was an original member, becoming vice-chairman in 1877, and chairman (on the death of Bishop Harvey Goodwin) in 1892.

But he did more than this, for when the first Bishop (Wilkinson) was appointed he became his commissary, a post which brought no light addition to the labours of the Rector of a parish like Stoke. The early history of the diocese may be described as full of troubles, and Sir Lovelace Stamer had a very anxious time. There were attacks made upon the Mission, accusing it of being a trading concern without a licence! These may have originated in Bishop Wilkinson's policy of buying large tracts of land in the hope of forming mission

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stations. There were other difficulties besides, and in 1875 the Bishop returned to England and very shortly resigned his post. At this time, says Mrs. Mackenzie, widow of a subsequent Bishop of Zululand, "poor Miss Mackenzie's heart would have failed had she not been supported by the unfailing sympathy and most real help of this whole-hearted friend [Sir Lovelace Stamer], who assured her that so great a work could not be given up."

Then came a period of great depression to those who had the welfare of the Mission at heart. The South African Bishops could not find a successor to Bishop Wilkinson, and in 1877 Miss Anne Mackenzie died at a time when the new diocese had for over two years been without a shepherd.

At last, in 1878, it was decided to appoint Mr. Allington to the bishopric. He died of fever at Wakkerstroom before he could be consecrated, and it really did seem as if there was to be nothing but trouble for the Church in Zululand. Through it all Sir Lovelace was the mainstay of the friends of the Mission. He, with his characteristic courage and determination, never lost heart himself or allowed others to do so. In 1880 his faith was justified. Bishop Douglas Mackenzie accepted a

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call to the difficult post which had been for nearly five years vacant. For ten years of anything but peace in Zululand he laboured devotedly, and (to quote again the words of Mrs. Mackenzie) "through the years of his troubled episcopate Sir Lovelace Stamer strengthened and cheered him in many perplexities, as those only can do who have more than a superficial knowledge of foreign mission work. Even with all his own overwhelming work as bishop and parish priest he helped greatly: how much the Church in Zululand owes to his intercessions, then on earth, now in Paradise, who shall say?" Through all the rest of his life Sir Lovelace Stamer kept up his interest in and work for the diocese of Zululand. There are proofs of this among his papers in the many letters from Bishop Carter, who succeeded Bishop Douglas Mackenzie, and in a long letter from Bishop Vyvyan, written at the time when he succeeded Bishop Carter on the latter being appointed to the diocese of Pretoria. To write to Sir Lovelace seems to have been the first thing that any one did who was suggested for the bishopric, or who needed anything for the furtherance of the work in Zululand.

When (in 1902) he became Chairman of the Administrators of the Fund for that see, "The Net,"

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the special magazine of the Mission, summed up his work in a few words, which are worth quoting. It said: "We are glad to announce that the Bishop of Shrewsbury has accepted the Chairmanship of the Administrators of the Zululand Mission in England. Probably no one is more intimately acquainted with the history of the Mission than he. In consenting to fill the place till now occupied by the late Bishop of Carlisle, he reminds us that he had known Bishop C. F. Mackenzie at Cambridge, that he had been one of the first with whom Miss Mackenzie took counsel after her return to England in 1862 as to the best way of perpetuating her brother's missionary work, that he had been present at the consecration of Bishop Wilkinson, and up to the time of Miss Mackenzie's death in 1877 had been closely connected with the concerns of the Mission. He also knew Mr. Allington, and had known as much as he could of Bishop Douglas Mackenzie in the brief visits he paid to England."

Mr. Wigram, who has for so many years been treasurer to the Mission, bears witness to the practical help that Sir Lovelace gave, stating that he was always at the Committee meetings, and that his advice was most useful.

While Zululand held the first place in his affec-

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tions it was by no means the only mission in which he interested himself. Several other bishops at work in far distant lands had claims of various kinds upon his affection, and to all he gave his sympathy and what help he could.

Bishop John Selwyn of Melanesia was, by reason of his father being Bishop of Lichfield and he himself having begun his ministry in that diocese, a personal friend whose work appealed strongly to Sir Lovelace, and a constant correspondence was kept up between them. Then there was the son of his old Rugby friend, the Bishop of Dover (Dr. Parry), who was consecrated in 1900 to the Bishopric of Guiana, on which occasion the Bishop of Shrewsbury was one of the two who presented the new bishop. With him, again, and with his work Sir Lovelace Stamer kept in frequent touch.

With the diocese of Nassau, under Bishop Churton, he had much interesting correspondence. This was only natural, for Bishop Henry Norris Churton, who succeeded to the bishopric in 1902, had, some thirty years previously, been one of his curates at Stoke. Bishop Abraham had brought them together and spoke of the choice of the curacy as "excellent for both chief and subaltern." At all events a lasting friendship was formed between the two future bishops, and when Mr.

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Churton was to be consecrated he wrote to the Bishop of Shrewsbury saying, "It is needless for me to say how deeply I feel your sympathy at a time when I have to take upon myself so great a responsibility. I had been led to expect that as the senior of those to be consecrated I should have been asked to choose the preacher, in which case it was in my mind to ask you : but as the Archbishop has said nothing to me about it, I conclude that the choice does not rest with me."

Before leaving the subject of Bishop Stamer's interest in missions, it is delightful to record that it was by no means solely the bishops and heads of the missions whom he helped. In this, as in all the rest of his work, he was always thoughtful to do what some call small kindnesses—things which, as a matter of fact, count for much in cheering and encouraging those who in less prominent positions bear much of the heat and brunt of the fray. A letter has just come to hand from a chaplain in Burma (the Rev. W. G. White) telling how, when a curate in England, Sir Lovelace Stamer sent him "The Guardian" every week : how the Bishop took a personal interest in his work, and, when he (Mr. White) was going out to Burma, presented him with a copy of "The Church and the Empire," and wrote asking to have news sent him from time

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to time from Burma. This is the more remarkable, as it all arose merely from the fact that a friend had given Mr. White's name to the Bishop as one to whom it would be a kindness to send "The Guardian."

CHAPTER XI

STOKE CHURCH CONGRESS—APPOINTMENT AS ARCHDEACON

THE year 1875 was an important one in the history of Stoke-upon-Trent, and an uncommonly busy one for its Rector. It was in the autumn of this year that the Church Congress met in that town, and Sir Lovelace Stamer had his first experience of the vast work necessary to prepare for and carry to a successful conclusion one of these great gatherings.

The idea that the Congress should meet at Stoke did not emanate from him. But when a telegram was sent him two years previously from the Bath Congress to ask, "If the Congress invites itself to Stoke, will Stoke receive us?" he took upon himself to say "Yes," relying (to use his own words) upon "the ready willingness of all parties in this and the neighbouring towns." It was a signal proof of the fact that he had already made Stoke a well-

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known centre of Church work that such a proposal should be made, and was as a matter of fact almost a personal compliment to himself.

In the January preceding the Congress a large number of circulars were sent out to most of the leading people likely to be concerned. The proposal to hold the Congress at Stoke met with a good deal of approbation, but some of the answers to the circulars brought remarkable criticisms. The last meeting had been held at Brighton, and for some reason does not seem to have commended itself to everybody. Among Sir Lovelace's letters—for he as head of the eight honorary secretaries to the Congress received all the replies—are to be found some written by eminent people whose experience of the Brighton gathering was not altogether happy. Thus, the Earl of Shrewsbury wrote hoping that if the Congress came to Stoke, it would be "better conducted than the one at Brighton." The Bishop of Oxford (Dr. Mackarness) in excusing himself from attendance stated that reports which reached him from Brighton made him doubt whether "the more active spirits were disposed to give friendly welcome to any bishops who might attend a Church Congress for the future." The same impression seems to have been conveyed to the Bishop of Manchester (Dr. Fraser),

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who does not actually mention Brighton, but says, "The tone of Church Congresses so far as I have experienced it has not done me any good, nor do I think that I am altogether a welcome actor in them."

Then there were people who thought that the difficulties of accommodating a great number of visitors, and of providing a hall large enough for the meetings, made the selection of Stoke unwise. As a matter of fact the question of sufficient hospitality being forthcoming need never have been raised. The residents of the Potteries came forward splendidly, and there were few houses of any size in which accommodation was not offered. So there were encouragements as well as discouragements to Sir Lovelace Stamer in the task to which he had set his hand.

The former he welcomed, the latter served chiefly to strengthen his determination to carry the matter through. Seeing the untiring work that he put into the undertaking, and inspired by his personal enthusiasm and influence, others soon followed his lead and backed him up heartily, though, as usual, he insisted upon doing by far the largest share of the work himself. One example may be given of the way in which he won over others to take a leading part in organising the

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meeting of the Congress. The Earl of Harrowby of that day wrote to Sir Lovelace in 1874 saying that he had so strong a feeling that a meeting of the Congress in that neighbourhood was not desirable, that he did not feel justified in putting himself forward and encouraging it. He added, however, that if it should appear to be the general wish he would not withhold his name. He thought that Church Congresses met too often, that as they had no authority for action they tended to become flat and lacking in sufficiently wide interest. Sir Lovelace set himself to remove these objections, with the result that Lord Harrowby's name appeared in the list of the Executive Committee, and the Bishop of Lichfield at the end of the Congress made special mention of the fact that "the venerable Earl of Harrowby, when resident in London during the session of Parliament, repeatedly attended the meetings of the Executive Committee, coming down from London in the morning and returning in the evening."

In October the Congress met at Stoke, and was in almost every way an immense success. How great the success proved to be can be gathered from various letters received by the Rector of Stoke when all was over. A neighbouring squire wrote as follows: "Before I touch upon

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any other subject I must first congratulate you (which I do very sincerely) on the complete success of the Congress. Nothing could be more satisfactory than the temper in which the discussions were conducted, and I fully and gladly admit that my sinister forebodings proved completely groundless. I shall henceforth take a much more favourable view of Church Congresses, and hope that this one at Stoke may not be barren of good results. To *your* exertions and to the Bishop's tact I consider that its success is mainly to be attributed."

Archdeacon Emery, sometimes called the Father of Church Congresses, considered that the "happy, blessed way" in which everything had passed off had given fresh life and vigour and usefulness to Congress. Lastly, the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Tait) sent Sir Lovelace a message of his recognition of "the great work which the Stoke Congress did."

It has been stated the Congress was successful in *almost* every way. Unfortunately there was one aspect in which it could not be looked upon by its promoters with satisfaction, and that was in the matter of finance. The number of members' tickets that was sold was a good deal below what had been usual at Congresses held at other places, and

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upon the sale of these the financial success or failure of a Church Congress must largely depend. Now Stoke-upon-Trent offered practically no attraction to visitors beyond the Congress itself, and there are always many clergy and others who attend these meetings quite as much for the sake of a little holiday in pleasant surroundings as for any other reason. None of these were likely to visit Stoke, and to that must be ascribed the large falling off in members' tickets. On the other hand, there was the gratifying fact that the inhabitants of the Potteries attended the evening meetings in considerable numbers, an average of eleven hundred tickets per evening being sold.

The whole expenses, including the cost of the building erected for the large meetings, which came to £1600, was about £2000, and the receipts proved to be just about half that sum. A guarantee fund of £2000 had been raised, so that it will be seen that the guarantors had to pay up ten shillings in the pound. Bishop Selwyn put the matter in the best possible light when, alluding to the splendid attendance at the evening meetings, he said in his closing speech, "We who have put down our names to the guarantee fund have the very great satisfaction of knowing that we have been the means of giving a real Christian source of enjoyment to

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4356 persons, at the small loss of one half of the amount of our contributions.”

There can be no doubt that one object which Sir Lovelace had in view in furthering the meeting of the Church Congress in Stoke, viz. the arousing of greater local interest in the Church generally, was fully accomplished.

It was eminently suitable that almost immediately after the close of the Congress the Rector of Stoke should have received the following letter from his Bishop.

*“The Palace, Lichfield,
20th Nov., 1875.*

My dear Sir Lovelace Stamer,

The Reverend Henry Calthorp, who now holds the Prebend of Longdon in this Cathedral, has tendered his resignation. I am sure that I shall be anticipating the wishes of the whole Arch-deaconry of Stafford in asking you to accept the Prebendal Stall, which will give you a place in the Diocesan Chapter, a body growing, I hope, every year in usefulness and public estimation. Beyond the power of doing good there is nothing in the appointment, shorn as it is of all its emoluments.

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Yrs. most truly,

G. A. LICHFIELD.”

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Sir Lovelace was duly installed at Lichfield Cathedral at the morning service on Friday, December 17th, and so received a step in ecclesiastical promotion which was recognised by all as happily coincident with the termination of his labours as Chief Secretary of the Congress.

This step was followed very closely by another. In the following year (1876) the unwieldy size of the Archdeaconry of Stafford led to a proposal that it should be subdivided, and some correspondence followed between the Bishop of Lichfield and Sir Lovelace Stamer, in the course of which it was suggested that if two archdeaconries could be formed, one for North Staffordshire and the other for South, the former should be allotted to Sir Lovelace. The difficulties that presented themselves are clearly explained in the following letter from Sir Lovelace and the Bishop's reply.

"Cliff Ville, 23 Nov., 1876.

My dear Lord,

I do not know how you stand with regard to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners on the question of the Subdivision of the Archdeaconry. But I venture to submit to your Lordship the following suggestion. I understand on good authority that the endowment is the real difficulty : and that the

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Commissioners declined the Bishop of Manchester's request for a similar subdivision on the ground that they could not furnish the £200 a year for the new Archdeacon. Now this occurs to me. Let your Lordship offer as a *prospective* endowment one of the residentiary Canonries in Lichfield Cathedral. I would undertake the duties of the Northern Archdeaconry without stipend until a vacancy occurs, when Mr. Iles [Prebendary Iles, who was destined for the Southern Archdeaconry] could take the canonry in lieu of his stipend as Archdeacon. . . .

I am sure you will believe that I do not make this suggestion from any personal ambition to be Archdeacon, which will increase work and responsibility in far larger measure than it will add to my position or influence. But I have always felt that my large income as Rector of Stoke lays upon me an obligation to do all that I can for the Church in the Parish, and, if called upon, in a wider sphere; and, believing that it will be for the good of this part of the Diocese, as well as that it is your Lordship's wish that there should be two Archdeaconries for the County of Stafford, I place myself at your Lordship's disposal to undertake the work to which you have designated me without salary, if that will assure the consent of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.

I believe that Bishop Lonsdale made an attempt

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of the same kind that your Lordship is making now, and he was told that it could be done provided that a Canonry was set apart for the endowment of the new Archdeacon.

I remain

Your Lordship's faithful Servt.,

LOVELACE T. STAMER."

The Bishop's reply was as follows :—

" The Palace, Lichfield,

Nov. 24th, 1876.

My dear Sir Lovelace Stamer,

I thought your letter so important that I sent it to Mr. Mowbray, M.P., one of the Estates Committee of the Ecclesiastical Commission, in order that he might sound his colleagues upon the main points of it.

If I am legally competent, I am quite ready to settle a Canonry in Lichfield Cathedral upon the Archdeacon of South Staffordshire, and leave the Archdeacon's income of £200 per annum for the Archdeacon of North Staffordshire, on the vacancy of the next Canonry. The only point in reserve is the duty of backing up the Bishop of Manchester in our joint fight for additional Archdeaconries. He has no Canonry which he can settle upon the Arch-

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deaconry in his Diocese, and therefore I must stand by him on the claim for Endowment until we are beaten, which I still hope we shall not be.

I thank you very much for your letter, which is a most valuable contribution to the fight which will have to be made early in February. In the meantime I must appoint Mr. Iles, subject to the division of the present Archdeaconry into two parts.

Yours most truly,

G. A. LICHFIELD."

The fight to which the Bishop alludes seems to have gone on for some time, for it was not till July 31st of that year that Sir Lovelace Stamer was at last installed as archdeacon. The Bishop of Lichfield evidently thought matters would be concluded some six months earlier, for on February 3rd, 1877, he wrote the following letter, in which it will be observed he prematurely bestowed the new title upon Sir Lovelace :—

" My dear Archdeacon,

I am very glad to hear of the successful inauguration of the new Archdeaconry, upon which may God grant an abundant blessing. I have a selfish reason among others, viz. that I shall not

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scruple to throw upon the Archdeacons many details of work according to the lesson which Jethro taught to Moses. With kind remembrances to Lady Stamer,

I remain,

Yours most truly,

G. A. LICHFIELD."

Matters were, however, not so quickly arranged with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Months went by, until at last in the August number of the Stoke Parish Magazine the following letter made its appearance :—

" My dear Friends,

Yesterday in Lichfield Cathedral I was formally installed to that office to which, as I think you are aware, the Bishop designated me upon Archdeacon Moore's death a year ago.

The formalities necessary to obtain the subdivision of the Archdeaconry of Stafford have been protracted; and it was not until Tuesday, July 24th, that the Order in Council constituting the new Archdeaconry appeared in the London Gazette. It is to bear the name of Stoke-upon-Trent.

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In accepting the appointment of its first Archdeacon, I trust that I have done nothing which will interfere with the due discharge of the duties which I owe to you. I shall continue to have a sufficient staff of assistant clergy, and I trust they will always be men on whose loyalty and cordial co-operation I may rely. I shall endeavour to arrange my work in the Archdeaconry so as never to be long absent from the Parish. . . .

Relying on your intercession that God would give me grace and strength for the fresh responsibilities laid upon me, I remain,

Your faithful Friend and Servant in Christ,

LOVELACE T. STAMER.

Aug. 1, 1877."

The new Archdeacon held his first visitation about three weeks after his instalment, summoning the Clergy to the centres of Stoke-upon-Trent, Leek, and Eccleshall. In the course of his Charge, he spoke of the division of the Archdeaconry of Stafford into two parts, and said, "I take it that the main intention of the Subdivision is not that the two archdeacons may have less to do than their predecessors in the undivided Archdeaconry, but that, devoting fully as much time and thought and pains

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to the execution of their office within a smaller area, what is done may be better done."

And so, taking up his new work in this spirit, he cheerfully added to the heavy burdens he already bore. Well was it, indeed, that the shoulders on which they were laid were broad and strong !

CHAPTER XII

THE BURIALS BILL, ETC.

JUST at the time that Sir Lovelace Stamer was appointed to the Archdeaconry of Stoke-upon-Trent, the clergy of the Church of England were greatly agitated as to the proposed legislation to permit Nonconformist ministers to conduct services at the funerals of members of their various denominations who might be buried in Churchyards. By far the larger number of clergy were heart and soul opposed to any such concession. Many thought that if the Nonconformist minister were allowed to hold a service in the Churchyard, there was nothing to prevent his doing the same in the church. Others—the Bishop of Peterborough (Dr. Magee) amongst them—though having no objection to the ministrations of religious Nonconformists, were so much afraid that the “infidel and blasphemer would march along with the religious Dissenter into the Churchyards,” that they too ranged themselves with the opposition. Meetings were held, agitation

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was general, petitions were signed. Thirteen thousand clergymen's signatures were obtained in less than a week to a declaration affirming that they were opposed to any legislation which should permit persons not ministers of the Church of England to claim as a right to officiate in her Churchyards, and to use forms and ceremonies therein which were not sanctioned by the Church. This being the state of affairs, it was impossible that no reference should be made to the proposed legislation in the Archdeacon's primary charge. As a matter of fact, he probably would have preferred to postpone the subject to some occasion more congenial than the first gathering of the clergy of his Archdeaconry. But the subject was in everybody's mind and on everybody's lips, and could not be put aside, even though he was obliged to take a line which he knew would be unpopular with his hearers.

It has already been mentioned more than once that Sir Lovelace Stamer's sympathies were extremely broad, and that his statesmanlike vision was far-seeing. These two qualities caused him to see the real grievance under which Nonconformists lay, and the uselessness of fighting against the only reasonable proposal for its removal. He scouted the suggestion that it should be left to each incumbent to grant or refuse permission to Nonconformists

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to conduct funerals in the Churchyards. In the course of his Charge he said that in that case "the chances of Burial Scandals would be greatly increased, and the varying practices of those with whom the power lay, some being easy to grant, and others stiff to refuse the privilege, would cause heartburnings and jealousy which would not be confined to those who were the subjects of that unequal treatment. He thought it needless to consider that further. It was certain that Nonconformists would never accept the concession on those terms, and the clergy might well complain of such a difficult discretion being left to them." He further held that the scare as to "the infidel and blasphemer" need not be taken seriously, for his belief was that in no place and on no occasion would such people find themselves at a greater disadvantage than in a Churchyard, and at the burial of the dead. "They may," he continued, "as we know unhappily that they do, catch the ears of men in the days of their health and strength, and pour the poison of their doctrines into hearts careless, worldly, and self-indulgent, glad to catch any suggestion that there is no God to mark what they do amiss, that the wages of sin is *not* death, that after death there is *no* judgment: but by the dying bed, when the realities of the unseen world are coming into view, in

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the hearing of the mourner, in the very presence of their dead, when they need consolation for some dear one whom they have lost, and are clinging to the hope that they have lost him only for a while, the infidel and blasphemer, with their mock litanies and rude denials of a resurrection of the dead, have little chance of being listened to."

These are noble words, and it may be hazarded that few Archidiaconal Charges have contained a finer passage. The Archdeacon went on to say that he could see no way in which a settlement of the question could be reached short of the proposed concession, though he was "not so presumptuous as to suppose that such an opinion coming from him would carry any weight."

As a matter of fact, the delivering of this opinion in his primary Charge caused some consternation among the clergy of the district, and in the following November the Rural Deans of the Archdeaconry sent Sir Lovelace a letter to the following effect :—

"Dear Archdeacon,

It is not without grave consideration that we, the Rural Deans of your Archdeaconry, have decided to write to you on the subject of that portion of your Primary Charge which has reference to the Burials Bill. You know us too well to imagine for

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a moment that this step implies our abandonment of either our respect for your office, or our personal regard for yourself. Indeed, these very feelings seem to make it incumbent upon us—seeing that we are not able in this particular instance to act on the views you have publicly expressed, but are even constrained to act in opposition to them—to state frankly and explicitly the grounds on which we adopt this course.

We consider, then, that the proposal to give to persons not members of the Church of England legal rights in our Churchyards, which they do not at present possess, and to which they have no claim, is *unjust* to the Church at large, *tyrannical* and *oppressive* to the Clergy, and highly *dangerous* to our institutions, both in Church and State.

[Here follow detailed reasons for their opinion.]

We feel ourselves called upon strenuously to oppose any such measure, and we deeply regret that, while it is our firm resolve to work heartily with you and under you in your Archdeaconry, our sense of right and wrong forbids us to act on the suggestions made in your Charge on this subject.

With every sentiment of affectionate respect we remain,

Dear Archdeacon,

Yours most faithfully, . . .”

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Here follow the signatures of six of the eight Rural Deans of the Archdeaconry. Of the remaining two, Sir Lovelace himself was one, and the other was away from home at the time. All those who signed have passed away except Prebendary Hutchinson, who in his hundredth year still ministers in his church at Blurton. He, in common with several of the others, was a close personal friend of Sir Lovelace Stamer, and this fact must have added to the regret felt on either side at this decided divergence of opinion and policy. But the Archdeacon, like the Rural Deans, had not taken up his position without grave consideration. Once he had made up his mind that a certain course was right, nothing ever turned him from it. He was absolutely fearless of what others might say or think. At the same time he had a way with him which prevented his making enemies or losing friends. As Mr. Blagg (a Staffordshire lay friend of his) most truly says, "He had the happy faculty of working hard without treading on other people's corns."

So it was in this case. Not one inch would he go back from the standpoint he had taken, and not one particle was he willing to lose of the affectionate confidence which existed between himself and his brother clergy. This can be gathered from his answer to the Rural Deans' letter. It was ad-

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dressed to the Senior Rural Dean, and ran as follows :—

“ Cliff Ville, Stoke-on-Trent,

Nov. 16, 1877.

My dear Mather,

Your letter, with the address of the Rural Deans, on the subject of my utterances on the Burials Bill has just been put into my hands. I cannot sufficiently thank you for the forbearance which the address displays.

Feeling, as you do, so very strongly on the question you might with fairness have expressed yourself with less consideration towards one who appears to be recklessly separating himself from his brethren. And I might well endure the strongest condemnation of the conclusions I have come to, if it is coupled with the assurance that I am not about to forfeit your personal friendship, nor lose the help and counsel which are essential to me in the discharge of my responsible office.

I can assure you that it was with no little hesitation and some pain that I found myself constrained to take a view of the Burials question so different from that of the great majority of the clergy, and to avow it. I am aware that the weight of argument and logical conclusion is on your side, and the further

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designs which Nonconformists declare they have against the Church, and mean to press for through this advantage, makes the idea of any concession very distasteful. Nevertheless, a grievance has been admitted to exist, and, however insignificant it may appear to you to be, Parliament is clearly determined that it shall be remedied, and that the remedy shall be in the direction of Lord Harrowby's Amendment. Is it wise, with this in prospect, for the clergy to be encouraging each other to uncompromising resistance? Will it not intensify the difficulty of accepting the new order of things? Of course I must be understood to be saying this in the conviction that no vital truth or principle is at stake. Were it otherwise concession would be impossible.

However, I am not going to try your patience by repeating what may be said in support of this view. All I will say is that I trust this will be a solitary difference of opinion and policy between us, and, for the rest, I hope we shall be found united in sentiment and action, labouring together to promote the best interests of the Church in this Arch-deaconry.

Believe me, yours very sincerely,

LOVELACE T. STAMER."

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This incident is worth the space that has been given to it, for it brings out Sir Lovelace's general leaning in ecclesiastical policy, as well as many of the eminent qualities to which reference has already been made.



From a photograph by Elliott & Fry

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CHAPTER XIII

APPOINTMENT TO BE BISHOP SUFFRAGAN OF SHREWSBURY

AFTER some ten years' experience of the work of the diocese of Lichfield, with its rapidly increasing population in the Staffordshire manufacturing districts, Bishop Maclagan came to the inevitable conclusion that it was more than he could accomplish single-handed. Naturally enough on looking round him he saw one man standing out pre-eminently as the helper whom he needed. Sir Lovelace Stamer had been for so long the central figure in all the Church work in the Potteries that upon him the Bishop's eye rested at once. Application was made to the Crown in January, 1888, for the appointment of a suffragan bishop for the diocese of Lichfield, and, when leave was granted, the Bishop at once asked the Rector of Stoke to allow himself to be nominated. The Queen's consent was not long in coming, and by

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the end of the month it became generally known that the Archdeacon of Stoke was to be the new Suffragan Bishop, taking his title from the beautiful old town of Shrewsbury, thus honouring the Shropshire part of the diocese of Lichfield.

The Bishop of Lichfield on January 11th wrote as follows :—

“ My dear Stamer,

The Queen has given her consent, and now nothing remains but to put the matter in proper form ; but till that is done it must be kept secret, as Her Majesty is very particular that nothing should be said in these cases until all things have been done according to rule. It would of course be convenient if you could be consecrated on the same day as Archdeacon Earle, and I will lose no time in taking the necessary steps.

.

I heartily thank God that I may now hope to have your much valued help in bearing a burden which, though a very blessed one in many ways, is too heavy for me to bear alone. It will set me free to do much that I have had at heart, but have

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never found myself free to attempt. You have my earnest prayers for all needed grace.

Yr. always affect.,

W. D. LICHFIELD.

P.S.—Of course Lady Stamer may be told. My wife knows, but literally *no one* else."

Two more letters came from the Bishop shortly after this. In the first of these he says, "The Archbishop is much pleased by my selection of you as Suffragan." From the second letter the following passage may be quoted: "I trust you will find a first-rate man for senior-curate, and that you will become more the Bishop of your parish than its Rector. Your influence and experience are much needed in other places as well as Stoke—and *there is a limit to mental as well as bodily strength*, although it seems hard for you to believe it."

It was not only the Archbishop and the Bishop of Lichfield who were pleased.

The chorus of approval was universal. The appointment was so obvious. Letters poured in by every post full of thankfulness at the choice—thankfulness for the sake of the diocese and of the Church at large. Those who criticised at all did so from the point of view that they would have liked to have seen him a Diocesan Bishop. The appointment to the new See of Wakefield was on the point

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of being made, and more than one correspondent expressed disappointment that he had not been nominated to that bishopric. It may, perhaps, be confidently asserted, now that it is possible to look back upon Sir Lovelace Stamer's whole life and work, that he was in many respects better fitted for a Diocesan than for a Suffragan bishopric. A great organiser, with immense powers of setting men to work and keeping them at it, gifted with a rapid grasp of the main bearings of a question and an almost equally rapid decision as to the way to deal with it, he was impatient of any one or anything that stood between him and the carrying out of what *he* thought right. He was, in fact, a man who knew he was right—and he generally was)—and meant to have his own way. This is a quality which is perhaps more useful in a commanding officer than in a second-in-command, and those who knew him to be possessed of it, and who also knew his fatherliness and wonderful personal influence, may be forgiven for thinking that he would have filled with greater advantage a Diocesan bishopric.

Before dealing with any of the letters which he received at this time from others, the first place must be given to that which he addressed to his parishioners.

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"Feast of the Purification, 1888.

My dear People,

Although the solemn step that lies before me is by this time well known to you all, yet I desire to address you as though it were a new announcement.

The Bishop of Lichfield has long felt the need for help in the work of his Diocese which is too much for the time and strength of one man, even after the severance of Derbyshire [this county became part of the new See of Southwell]. At the beginning of this year he applied to the Queen for permission to have a Suffragan Bishop, and, on leave being granted, he expressed to me his strong wish that I should undertake the office. I regarded it as a call that I could not refuse. It involved more work and a greater responsibility. From the latter I felt that I ought not to shrink; and as for the former I saw that by a process of rearrangement and retiring from engagements that did not strictly belong to me in my ministerial capacity, I might so economise my time and strength that I might be almost as much at your service as I have been since I became Archdeacon. I therefore left myself in the Bishop's hands to nominate me as his Suffragan; and in due course, the Queen's approval having been signified, I am awaiting Consecration, which

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is fixed for St. Matthias' Day, February 24th. It will involve, as I think you understand, no change in my position towards you as Rector of Stoke. Though I take the title of Bishop of Shrewsbury, my work will not lie in Shropshire more than in Staffordshire. I am appointed to help the Bishop in whatever part of the Diocese he may require my services. I humbly trust that I may afford him material relief, and also have opportunities of helping my brother Clergy in ways not open to me hitherto. I also trust that in the highest order of the sacred Ministry, and strengthened with the grace that will come to me through my Consecration, I may also be found, for the time that remains to me, better qualified to do a Pastor's work towards you. As far as I have yet learnt, you have received the announcement of my advance to the Episcopate most kindly and generously. Instead of saying that it ought to lead to my resignation of the living of Stoke, you have assured me of your pleasure at finding that no such severance is impending. Be sure that I shall endeavour, on my part, to make the best return I can for such a token of your deep-rooted affection. I will not needlessly increase my engagements away from you. And I will make such a provision for the work here that you shall have

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as little cause as possible to complain of my absence. Now what I earnestly ask you all to do, in the prospect of what lies before me, is to PRAY FOR ME. The day of my Consecration, if God wills, is to be the Festival of St. Matthias, who was called to fill a vacant place in the Apostolic body. In the Collect for that day you are taught to pray that ‘the Church may be preserved from false Apostles,’ and may be ‘ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors.’ Pray this prayer with me, your Rector, shortly to be made a Bishop, in your minds ; and I shall feel assured of a strength being granted me which will enable me to ‘use the authority given me, not to destruction, but to salvation, not to hurt, but to help.’ And that you may give me the aid I ask for more willingly, read over the Form for Consecrating a Bishop in your Prayer-books, and you will learn the nature of the responsibilities attaching to the Order to which I am about to be raised.

I have now said to you everything that is in my mind. May I not count that the ties which have bound us to each other for thirty years may not be loosened, but rather strengthened ? And so let me remain

Ever your affectionate Friend and Pastor,

LOVELACE T. STAMER.”

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This was a most characteristic letter. In the first place it reveals the writer's deep sense of the dignity and responsibility of the position to which he was called—a sense that was ever with him to the end. Secondly, it gave expression to his definite faith and trust. “Strengthened,” he says, “by the grace which will come to me”—not “which I hope may come to me.” He knew from past experience that he could absolutely count upon his God, and his trust was firm as a rock.

Then there is in the letter a subtle tone of authority. It could hardly have been otherwise. He was already a sort of unconsecrated Bishop of the Potteries, and for thirty years he had been a ruler—loving indeed, but still a ruler—of his parish. So that the letter in its dignity has some of the quality of a royal proclamation. But, when the last words were to be written, all this disappears in the rush of warm feeling which came over him. It is almost as if their affectionate friend and pastor had ended by begging his people just to pray for him and to love him still.

The allusion to “such a provision for the work here” calls for a word of explanation. It was felt both by the Bishop of Lichfield and by Sir Lovelace Stamer that it would be necessary to procure the services of some man of special experience and

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attainments to be a sort of Chief of the Staff when the Rector of Stoke took up his new duties. To this end Bishop Maclagan promised to give £100 a year in addition to the £200 which he would give to Sir Lovelace in place of the similar sum which the latter would lose on his resignation of the Archdeaconry.

It will be noticed with what remarkable speed everything was arranged and carried through in connection with Sir Lovelace's appointment. From the time of the Bishop of Lichfield's application for permission to have a Suffragan to the date of that Suffragan's consecration less than two months elapsed.

Although this could not be said to be the doing of the Bishop-designate, except in so far as he at once determined that it was "a call he could not refuse," yet it must have given him pleasure. It was exactly after his own heart. See what ought to be done and carry it out *at once*, was a principle on which he had always acted.

But during the few weeks that remained before the 24th of February many preparations had to be made and many things occurred which were most gratifying. Perhaps the chief of these was the receipt by every post of letters of congratulation. Those who have gathered some impression from

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these pages of the affectionate nature of Sir Lovelace and of the warm place in his heart that he always kept for old friends will realise the pleasure with which he received letters from Turvey and from Long Melford. From the former place his old friend Mrs. Higgins wrote as follows :—

“ Turvey Abbey, Feb. 16th.

Dear Bishop Elect,

.

All at Turvey think and speak of you constantly, and many a simple loving heart will remember you on St. Matthias' Day. I believe our kind rector proposes to have a service in our church on that occasion, which will be a very delightful way of remembering you.

I pray that God will bless you in all you undertake, and that He will give you strength to undertake all the additional labour that will fall on you.

Believe me to remain, dear Sir Lovelace

(for the last time !),

Yr. sincere and affectionate

HELEN E. HIGGINS.”

From Long Melford came a letter from the rector of that parish saying that before reading

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the Ember-day collect he had at each service asked the congregation "specially to pray for Sir Lovelace Stamer, Rector of Stoke, and formerly curate of this parish, who will be consecrated Bishop of Shrewsbury on Friday next."

It is not a little remarkable to find these expressions of feeling in parishes where his ministry had been brief and had ended more than thirty years before.

Then there came a letter from Canon Macaulay, with whom Sir Lovelace started work at Stoke—the first of the great band of curates—bearing its witness to the qualifications of his old rector for episcopal responsibilities. "Your great power of administration," he wrote, "strong and devoted capacities for work, and large-hearted sympathies, will enable you with God's blessing to be of valuable service to the Church in your Diocese."

The late Lord Harrowby wrote a warm letter of congratulation, in the course of which he declared that he knew no selection which would give more general satisfaction or be more rich in promise of blessing to that populous and important neighbourhood. But he felt it difficult to congratulate Sir Lovelace personally, as he had the gravest apprehension of the effect upon his (Sir Lovelace's) health of the heavy additional work. He concluded

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a very charming letter by saying that while, as an old friend, he rejoiced that all honour should be done to Sir Lovelace, yet he could not help begging him to put some limit to his labours.

This last thought came into the minds of many of his friends who knew his voracity for work. A lay neighbour feared that the arrangement would sorely try the strength of the Rector of Stoke, and then went on to make a forecast by saying, "Surely the proud Salopians will have too much proper pride and self-respect to be contented for long with a Suffragan, and will bestir themselves with a view to the establishment of a new see, or, rather, the resuscitation of an old one." This prophecy has been so far from being fulfilled that Shropshire does not any longer even bestow a title upon a Suffragan !

A letter from the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, after congratulating the Bishop Elect, refers to the process by which a Doctor's degree should be conferred by the University, and mentions the curious fact that no similar application had ever reached the Council of the Senate, with whom the jurisdiction in such matters rested, because all Suffragan Bishops up to that time had been Oxford men !

The Bishop of St. Alban's, Sir Lovelace Stamer's

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old friend Dr. Claughton, sent an affectionate letter beginning, "Few things have given me such pleasure as your appointment to the Episcopate, and Walsham How's acceptance of the See of Wakefield," and ending with the words, "May God ever bless you in the future as He has in the past, and make you a blessing, is my humble fervent prayer."

From the immediate district round Stoke came, of course, many letters. As an example of the kind of feeling that was aroused by the appointment it may be mentioned that the Vicar of St. John's, Longton, wrote to say that his parishioners of their own accord called a representative meeting, at which a resolution was passed warmly congratulating Sir Lovelace Stamer and expressing a hearty desire that he might be spared for many years and be greatly blessed in the work of his holy office. This action on the part of the good people of St. John's, Longton, was prompted by their feeling for one "who had stood so faithfully by them, and been such a friend in their time of need"—an expression which might well have been used by many parishes in that neighbourhood and by hundreds of individuals.

But it was not Church people only who rejoiced. One of the most striking characteristics of Sir

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Lovelace Stamer was his broad-minded sense of the brotherhood of man, which endeared him to many who did not agree with him in religious matters. A leading Nonconformist wrote: "As a Nonconformist and as a citizen I have always admired the intense zeal you have displayed in all the many labours you have taken in hand, and the kind and Christian way in which you have always treated those who either in religious or social questions have not seen eye to eye with you. And I trust you will pardon me in so far saying that your courtesy shown to me many years ago has always been a pleasure to my mind. No one, I am sure, is more susceptible of the honour placed on this district through you than the many Nonconformists in the parish, and I only echo the sentiments of many when I say inasmuch as you have by God's help done much to promote His glory and the well-being of all, you may in your more high and exalted ecclesiastical position be still more able to promote the spiritual condition of your fellow-men."

This letter, perhaps, gave Sir Lovelace Stamer as much pleasure as any that he received. He delighted in his intercourse and sympathy with men of all shades of belief. In this connection a passage from the paper of Mr. Beach (who has

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already been quoted) may find a fitting place. Speaking of the Rector of Stoke he says: "It was always pleasing to hear of his friendly relations with people who had nothing (apparently) in common with him in Churchmanship or politics. The late Mr. Woodall, M.P. for Hanley, was a strong Nonconformist and an advanced Radical. One day I fell in with Sir Lovelace, who told me that he had just come from visiting his *dear* friend, Mr. Woodall, who he feared was sick unto death."

Finally, two specially interesting letters must be quoted in full, one from inside the diocese, the other from without. The first is from the late Bishop Abraham, one of Sir Lovelace's dearest and most intimate friends.

"Septuagesima Sunday, 1888.

The Close, Lichfield.

My dear Sir Lovelace,

The Bishop has just told me of a thing that rejoices my heart, namely, the public recognition of your long and devoted services to the Church of Christ, in this diocese more especially—and how he has obtained the sanction of the Queen to your appointment as Bishop of Shrewsbury.

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I rejoice at it from all points of view—you have worked harder than most men it has been my good fortune to know—and you worked without any *arrière pensée* of reward, and therefore have obtained it. You will now have to leave the ordering of tables and give yourself more undividedly to the Ministry of the Word and the edifying of the portion of the diocese committed to you.

I rejoice at it also for the Bishop's sake—that he has seen and recognised your work, and at the same time the independent spirit in which you have done that work. And I rejoice at it for the sake of the diocese and the people whom you will stir up to labours of love.

And then once more 'as in private duty bound' (as we used to hear and say in the University pulpit) I am so pleased to think how Lady Stamer and all the olive branches, that (used to be and still sometimes) are round about your table, will thank God for putting it into the heart of His servant to make public recognition of your ministry. You will, I know, believe me to be

Your sincere and affectionate

Brother and Friend,

C. J. ABRAHAM, Bp."

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The second letter came from the late Archdeacon Norris, and ran as follows :—

“ *Bristol, Feb. 5, 1888.*

My dear old Friend,

This news makes me very happy, and it must make you happy. The ‘ Friend, come up higher ! ’ reaches you through one who knows you thoroughly : and this relieves you of all responsibility, and enables you to say, ‘ It is of God.’

This seems to me to make the appointment of Suffragan Bishop happier, so far, than appointment by the Crown through the Prime Minister. And then, again, the office of Suffragan Bishop is in some respects less encumbered with non-spiritual functions than the Diocesan’s.

None but a real *man of God* can keep himself ‘ unspotted from the world ’ on that perilous bench !

In all that is purely spiritual, in the laying on of hands, both in ordaining and in confirming, and in Benediction, you are co-ordinate with the Bishops of the Holy Catholic Church of all time—and what a ‘ Candidatus exercitus ’ it is into which the Holy Ghost is calling you !

While there is another element of happiness :

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as you escape snares, so you will be saved much that is most painful in Diocesan work. For I take it that the Diocesan can hardly devolve the several acts of discipline upon his Suffragan. Well! You have worked most perseveringly in an arduous and in some respects unlovely field of work. And now your residue of years will be spent in more gracious pastures. And this is as it should be. I am longing to know whether you keep your Archdeaconry like Parry and Blomfield: and where your home will be: this last concerns Lady Stamer almost more than you, but I am sure she must be very happy in the prospect. It will be precisely the tonic you must be needing—both spiritually and bodily. God bless you, my friend, and give you grace to serve Him in the higher sphere as singly and sincerely as you have served Him in the lower.

I insist on your not answering this letter.

Ever yrs. affectly.,

J. P. NORRIS."

Archdeacon Norris evidently thought that the new bishop would be sure to resign the living of Stoke, but might very possibly retain his Archdeaconry. As a matter of fact exactly the reverse came to pass. It was intended that by retaining

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the rich benefice of Stoke Sir Lovelace Stamer might afford to hold the office of Bishop Suffragan, for which no sufficient provision could otherwise at that time be made. For four years after his consecration he carried on the two great works of Rector of a huge parish and Bishop Suffragan. Then, as will be seen, it became too heavy a strain, and a change was inevitable.

With regard to the Archdeaconry, there was a strong feeling from the first that he must lay down the duties of that office. Archdeacon Iles, who, it will be remembered, was appointed to the Archdeaconry of South Stafford at the time the old Archdeaconry was subdivided, wrote full of anxiety on the subject. After offering Sir Lovelace his best wishes and prayers for God's blessing on his "new venture of work," he said, "I am anxious, very anxious about you, as you had before too much to do, and I therefore much hope that you will resign your Archdeaconry. The office of Archdeacon has mainly secular work, unsuited for him who is called to the highest spiritual work; and, if by resigning you thereby lose your important work in Convocation, we (i.e. the diocese or Chapter) should be certain to send you again at the next election.

"But, more than this, no living man can do the

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work of Bishop Suffragan in a diocese like Lichfield, of Rector of 17,000 souls, and of Archdeacon of more than a hundred benefices with some 330,000 people. And if you try to do it you will assuredly break down. Surely your aim must be to preserve your health, first for the sake of your great and well-worked parish, and secondly for the sake of the diocese in which you are to have high office. The Archdeaconry only comes third (or fourth when I reckon in your family) in importance. The loss of it now takes from you no dignity, but rather strengthens your position, and certainly strengthens the work of the Church, because you would then have the fellowship and assistance of another good man as Archdeacon."

The same feeling obtained very largely throughout the diocese. Bishop Stamer himself was perhaps the only person who did not at first see it quite in the same light. He never seems, in his positive greed for work, to have believed that any load was too heavy for his broad shoulders, and, in the next place, he was extremely reluctant to run any risk of losing his seat in Convocation.

However, he went to see the Bishop of Lichfield on the matter, and next day received the following letter :—

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“ Lichfield, 18th Feb., 1888.

My dear Stamer,

I have thought carefully over our conversation of to-day, and have not failed to ask God's guidance in the weighty matter which you left for my decision. I have come to the conclusion that for several reasons it would be well that you should not continue to hold your Archdeaconry. First of all—with regard to your own health. I am sure this has weighed greatly with those who have expressed the same opinion. We know with what earnestness and with what unsparing diligence you throw yourself into any work which you have to do, and, however much the duties of a Suffragan might be made to work in with those of an Archdeacon, there could not fail to be a considerable amount of additional labour under which it is quite probable that your health might give way.

Further—we must bear in mind that in these days there is an increasing prejudice in the minds of Churchmen against the multiplication of offices in one person ; and I think there is no doubt that the great majority will hear with satisfaction that you have resigned the Archdeaconry, although they might not have blamed you if you had retained it.

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There remains also the hope, amounting I believe to a moral certainty, that you will retain your seat in Convocation as an elected Proctor under the arrangement which I propose.

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I earnestly trust that all this is according to God's will, and that it may be to His glory.

I hope the day is not far distant when the Suffragan Bishops will sit with us in the Upper House.

Believe me, my dear Stamer,

Always affectly. yours,

W. D. LICHFIELD."

This letter, of course, settled the matter, as the decision had been left to the Bishop by Sir Lovelace, and any reluctance he may have felt was entirely overcome when he found that his friend, the present Dean of Rochester, then Rector of Leigh in Staffordshire, was to succeed him.

But there is a little more to be said about the expression which the inhabitants of Stoke gave to their feelings when the honour that had been paid to their Rector became known. There was a moment

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of terrible anxiety as to whether they would lose him from Stoke, but once they were assured upon that point there was a universal sense of pride and joy. Meetings were quickly called, in order that some tangible expression of their feelings might be decided upon. The ladies of the town made up their minds to present him with his episcopal robes, while the rest of the parish determined to mark the sense of the honour done to their Rector by raising a fund to renovate the Parish Church and rebuild the organ, which it had been ascertained was the form which Sir Lovelace would prefer that any testimonial should take.

The short time that remained before the day of Consecration arrived was spent by Sir Lovelace Stamer in retreat at Alton Vicarage, the home of his friend the Rev. A. Moncrieff, now Vicar of Rugeley, who put his house at Sir Lovelace's disposal for the purpose. How grateful he was for this quiet time was proved by the fact that for all the rest of his life he never failed to write to Mr. Moncrieff on St. Matthias' Day to thank him for what had proved such a helpful time, and to assure him that he (Sir Lovelace) never forgot it.

St. Matthias' Day (February 24th) saw a great congregation at St. Paul's Cathedral to witness the Consecration of two Suffragan Bishops, viz.,

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Archdeacon Earle, who was the newly appointed Suffragan for London with the title of Bishop of Marlborough, and Archdeacon Sir Lovelace Stamer, who became Bishop of Shrewsbury.

The Consecrating Bishops were the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Benson), the Bishop of London (Dr. Temple), the Bishop of Lichfield (Dr. Maclagan), the Bishop of Dover (Dr. Parry), the Bishop of Bedford (Dr. Walsham How), and Bishop Bromby. The two Bishops who presented Sir Lovelace Stamer were the Bishops of Lichfield and Dover, the latter having been a close friend ever since they were boys together at Rugby.

In the administration of the Holy Communion which followed, the new Bishop of Shrewsbury gave the Cup after the Bishop of Lichfield. Describing this in the Parish Magazine he wrote: "It was a cause of never-to-be-forgotten joy and thankfulness to him that among the Communicants there were, besides his own nearest and dearest, many of his former and present Curates, old and valued neighbours from Staffordshire, together with a considerable representation of his dear Stoke people, headed by his faithful friend and Churchwarden, Alderman Hargraves."

And so began a new epoch in the life of Sir

BISHOP SUFFRAGAN OF SHREWSBURY

Lovelace Stamer, an epoch that would naturally be expected to have added to his labours if it were not for the fact that it is difficult to fill a full cup any fuller !

CHAPTER XIV

STOKE RECTORY ACT

IT was in the year immediately following his Consecration (1889) that Sir Lovelace Stamer, Bishop of Shrewsbury, put his hand to the most important undertaking of his incumbency of Stoke-upon-Trent, which had then lasted more than thirty years. There can be little doubt that the experience he was already beginning to acquire of the additional burden which episcopal duties must needs lay upon his shoulders, made him feel that the time could not be very far distant when he would have to give up the charge of his great parish. With this vast place, uncouth enough in outward appearance, but teeming with an ever-growing population of working men and women, and therefore appealing to him in the strongest possible manner, he had become so completely united in interests and affection, that the thought of leaving it without an effort to ensure the appointment of its future Rectors being in proper hands began to cause him considerable anxiety.

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The living had been in private patronage for 250 years, and since 1817 had been in the hands of the Tomlinson family. As the Bishop himself may be said by the year 1889 to have represented the family for such purposes, it may be asked why he should not have let matters alone and been content to feel that either he or his heirs would make a proper presentation to the living. The answer to this lies in the fact that by the wills of the Bishop's grandfather and uncle the patronage was held by Trustees upon trust to realise its value by sale.

Although no steps had hitherto been taken to carry this instruction into effect, yet the trusts for sale remained, and in fact an Order had been made by the Court of Chancery directing a sale of the Tomlinson property which included the advowson, and it made the Bishop uneasy. In a letter to his parishioners, issued in January, 1889, he used these words: "No attempt has [hitherto] been made to part with the Advowson, though the direction to sell it has been all along, as it is still, in force. Often and often, during these thirty-one years, I have thought anxiously of the future of the parish, and of the flock which has grown to be so dear to me." Any such notion as putting up the cure of souls to public auction was naturally abhorrent to him. So it was that he cast about for some means

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by which he might ensure the patronage being placed in safe hands for evermore.

But there was one difficulty to be overcome at the start. The Trustees of the Tomlinson family could not legally part with the advowson except at a fair price. That this price must be large was obvious, for the *gross* income was not far short of £3500, though such outgoings as £1200 a year for curates' stipends, and various charges paid to surrounding parishes, brought the *net* amount to a much smaller figure.

What Sir Lovelace Stamer wanted was to make the Bishops of Lichfield patrons of the living. How could this be done while a big price had to be paid to the Trustees? With his clear business head, and with his unvaried readiness to sacrifice his own interests, Sir Lovelace saw his way. What his plan was cannot be more clearly stated than by quoting from his second letter to his parishioners on the subject, published in February, 1889. In the course of this letter he says: "In my previous letter I stated that there was a fund in existence, created by an Act of 1827, out of which the purchase of the Advowson from its present owners might be made if Parliament would permit it. It is properly called 'an Accumulating Fund,' for it has grown out of the deduction, half-year by half-year, of one-sixth of

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the interest on the capital derived from the sale of Glebe Lands and Tithes (which would otherwise have been paid to the Rector), and its investment at compound interest 'in the name of the Accountant General of the Court of Chancery, *ex parte* the Rector of Stoke.' The intention plainly was to augment still further the income of the Rector; for at any time (as the Act provides), 'on petition of the Rector or Patron or Ordinary,' it might have been invested in land, and as Rector I might have received the rents, as in the case of any other glebe land. But no such investment has ever been asked for by me. For a long time past it has been held to be undesirable that the Clergy should be landed proprietors; on the contrary, increased facilities have been lately given them to sell their Glebes. And so this fund has accumulated until it has reached £15,730."

It is interesting to notice here that when the living came to be valued by two valuers, one assessed it at £17,000 and the other at £13,875. The mean of these sums was agreed upon, which, being £15,437, came as nearly as possible to the amount of the Accumulated Fund.

But the vesting of the patronage in the Bishops of Lichfield was only one part of the scheme. Sir Lovelace Stamer desired greatly that the large

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funds belonging to the Rectory of Stoke might be partially used in increasing the value of some of the neighbouring parishes. So a second portion of the Act provided for the increase of the endowments of Hartshill, Penkhull, and Trent Vale to £300 a year each, exclusive of pew rents, and of that of Fenton to £400. To do this a capital sum of over £20,000 would have to be alienated from Stoke. A third provision of the Act was to set aside a sum of £4,000 to build a suitable Rectory House on a site nearer to the Church than Cliff Ville, and to sell Cliff Ville and the land belonging to it, adding the proceeds to the funded property of the living. The site for the proposed new Rectory was already provided, for when in 1864 Sir Lovelace moved to Cliff Ville Bishop Lonsdale of Lichfield insisted on an acre of glebe land being reserved in the centre of the town, in case some such project as this were at any time set on foot. This site was, however, sold to a Mr. Holtom, and repurchased under the provisions of the Act for the purposes of a new Rectory. It may be doubted whether the move from Cliff Ville to the present Rectory was wise. It was certainly the most doubtful part of the Act. At first sight it may have seemed to have been as wise and self-sacrificing as the rest, and no doubt the Bishop of Shrewsbury

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sometimes wished, when, after a long afternoon's work in the town, finishing up with a cup of tea at the Coffee Tavern, he had to climb the hill to get home, that he lived nearer to the centre of his labours. But he probably did not take into account the benefit to his health of the exercise entailed by the walk to and fro, and by the purer air which surrounded his house at Cliff Ville. It is more than possible that by living in the middle of his flock a Rector of Stoke may find his powers of helping them diminished. It saves time, but time is by no means everything.

It will thus be seen what was the scope of the Act which Sir Lovelace arranged should be laid before Parliament. The solicitors who were engaged upon it were Messrs. Cooper of Newcastle, Staffordshire, and the counsel who were briefed were Mr. Littler, q.c., Mr. Jeune, q.c., and Mr. Wolstenholme. But, strange as it may seem, the proposals contained in the Act, in spite of Sir Lovelace's careful explanation of them in a series of published letters to his parishioners, were misunderstood in many quarters, and met with a good deal of hostile criticism.

First of all, some thought that his main object in handing over the patronage of the living of Stoke to the Bishops of Lichfield was to provide a stipend for a Suffragan Bishop. It was feared that

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the income would thus be expended rather for the good of the diocese at large than for that of Stoke-upon-Trent. But this was never his intention. Here are his own words, taken from one of the above-mentioned published letters: "I can say no more than I have already said to disabuse your minds of there having been any thought of making the income of Stoke a permanent provision for a Suffragan Bishop. Of course, I cannot bind our present Bishop or his successors, and no doubt a way for the increase of the episcopate through Suffragans, which has found much favour of late, has been their appointment to benefices of considerable value. But I would have you notice that they are invariably parishes with small populations ; and I, with the experience of the last year, should certainly hesitate to advise a repetition of that which I have undertaken, viz. the chief charge of a parish of seventeen thousand souls in union with the duties of Suffragan to the Bishop of Lichfield. However ably he might be seconded (and in this I am at the present time the most fortunate of men), the physical strain and mental anxiety are sufficient to overtax him."

Secondly, there were those who professed to think that the application of the accumulated fund to the purpose of purchasing the living was an

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unfair use of the money, inasmuch as it would be paid over to the representatives of the Tomlinson family, and so might, in a certain sense, be said to come back, after all, to Sir Lovelace Stamer. But those who argued in this way seemed to have failed to grasp two facts: first, that what it was right for the Rector of Stoke to do in the matter it was right for him to do whatever the accident of his birth, and secondly, that at any time during the past thirty years he might have caused the fund to be applied to the purchase of land from which he personally would have received the rents, but he had never done so.

Thirdly, Stoke is essentially a "business" place, and there lurked in the minds of many business people a suspicion that the Rector must mean to make something out of the job. No matter that they were shown that by the augmentation of other livings that of Stoke must become less valuable. The unanswerable question in their minds was, "What is he doing it for?" To this class of man it is inconceivable that any higher motive than to "get" something can influence other people's actions. Just as when Bishop Walsham How refused the valuable bishopric of Durham in order to continue his work at Wakefield, it was a not infrequent comment among the West Riding

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folk, "Well, it may be very fine—but it's not *business!*"

When the personality of Sir Lovelace Stamer is considered, and when it is remembered that for thirty years he had been living on terms of exceptional intimacy with his great parish—caring for its welfare in things social and civil almost as much as in things religious and ecclesiastic—so that his people must have known to the full his innate integrity and whole-hearted generosity, it is difficult to imagine such criticisms of his purposes being long-lived. And they apparently were not, for they resulted in no real opposition to the measure, and when, in June 1889, a meeting of the Parochial Conference of Stoke was held, it is recorded that: "After listening to an explanation from the Rector of the Stoke Rectory Bill, it was moved by Mr. C. S. Jones, and seconded by Mr. Hawkins, and carried unanimously, 'That the Parochial Conference desires to express its approval of the provisions contained in the Stoke Rectory Bill.'"

But it must not be supposed that all was plain sailing. Opposition to the Bill was not, indeed, forthcoming from Stoke itself, but at the last moment—after the first reading in the House of Lords, where the Bill was introduced—the trustees of a proprietary chapel, St. John's, Hanley, inter-

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posed with objections, and contrived to add a good deal to the trouble of getting the Act passed.

In order to understand how they were able to do this, it should be realised that the ancient parish of Stoke-upon-Trent originally comprised no less than thirty square miles. In 1807 an Act of Parliament separated off a number of chapelries (including such important places as Newcastle-under-Lyme and Burslem) and made them into distinct Rectories. In the year 1827 a further Act, promoted by Mr. John Tomlinson, patron of the living of Stoke, authorised the sale of all tithes and rectorial dues belonging to the Rectory, endowed two new churches, and made certain other provisions. The Rectory of Stoke at that time extended over twelve square miles, and constituted the chief part of a manufacturing district called the Staffordshire Potteries, with a population of 30,000 inhabitants. Of this district Hanley formed a part.

Now the Church of St. John's in that place was merely a proprietary chapel, depending upon pew rents. It had no definite cure of souls attached to it, and its minister was allowed to live anywhere within ten miles of it. Mr. John Tomlinson evidently did not consider this a satisfactory permanent arrangement, and he had a clause inserted in the above-mentioned Act of 1827 by which it was

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enacted that if and when the Trustees of the chapel were willing to come to an arrangement with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, under which the Trustees' right of nomination and presentation to the chapel should be surrendered, and, further, when separate districts for ecclesiastical purposes should have been assigned to this chapel, a sum fixed by the Act at £500 might properly be paid out of the endowments of Stoke in increase of the endowment of St. John's, Hanley. This sum was only to be allotted when a sum of £500 had been produced by the sale of Easter dues and such-like payable in respect of houses, etc., situate in the township in which the chapel stood.

This condition had never been fulfilled, and the Trustees of St. John's, Hanley, had, therefore, never been in a position to claim the £500. But this did not mean that the Rector of Stoke had ever been negligent of the interests of the place. In a letter written by Sir Lovelace Stamer and now lying before the present writer, he states that so long ago as 1859, i.e. very shortly after his coming to Stoke, he entered into negotiations with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners with a view to augmenting the income of St. John's, Hanley, and was met by a distinct refusal to entertain the question so long as the proprietary rights were maintained. Later on he

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made a further offer to the representative of the Trustees to augment the income of St. John's to *£500 a year*, provided that by the surrender of the pew rights the assignment of a district could be assured. A very different offer this to the mere lump sum of *£500* as proposed by the Act of 1827. But it had all been in vain, and therefore it was arranged to leave all mention of St. John's, Hanley, out of the Stoke Rectory Act, an omission that was not prejudicial to the interests of the place, as the augmentation of the income could have been quite well carried out with the consent of the Bishop and the patron under Acts that were already in existence.

Almost the first symptom of trouble from the quarter of St. John's, Hanley, appeared in a public speech made by a prominent person connected with the chapel, in the course of which the omission of the case of St. John's from the Act was alluded to as "an unfortunate oversight." This naturally gave pain to Sir Lovelace Stamer, who had made efforts, as has been mentioned, to help the income of St. John's on more than one occasion, but had always been foiled by the reluctance of the Trustees to abolish the pew-rent system, or to part with their right to present to the ministry of the chapel. A certain amount of correspondence ensued, but it

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was not until very late in the day that any formal opposition to the Act was made by the Trustees. There were several interviews in London between the solicitor for the Act and the representative of the Trustees, for it was felt that, if possible, it would be better to come to some agreement with them. After some discussion, the latter gentleman proposed (1) that the pew rents should be bought up out of the funds of Stoke Rectory, and abolished; (2) that a district should be assigned by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners; (3) that on such assignment (but not before) the income of St. John's, Hanley, should be increased to £500 a year. These proposals he explained to be subject to the approval of the Trustees, and they appear to have been generous enough in all conscience towards St. John's. Judge, then, of the annoyance of the promoters of the Bill when a further proposal was made by the Trustees that they (the promoters) should pay all the costs incurred by St. John's, Hanley, in the matter! Strong objection was naturally taken to this, the promoters considering that, as a very handsome present was being made to St. John's, it was, to say the very least, an ungracious suggestion.

This last incident is a slight indication of the remarkable spirit which appears to have actuated

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those who represented St. John's, Hanley, in the matter. Again and again they were assured that the object of the promoters of the Act was thoroughly friendly, as indeed the amount by which the chapel was to be benefited was proof. But all overtures of a friendly nature seem to have been met with suspicion and threats of wrecking the Bill. It was a painful episode, but all's well that ends well, and in the end an agreement was arrived at and the clauses affecting St. John's were duly inserted.

It was characteristic of the Bishop of Shrewsbury that, not content with publishing letters to his parishioners explaining the proposals of the Act, he should, when it finally received the Royal Assent, which it did on August 26th, 1889, have issued a further letter stating exactly what had now become settled by Act of Parliament. After expressing his thankfulness for having attained what he had "so long and anxiously desired," he sums up what had been secured as the consequence of "the annexation of the Advowson of Stoke-upon-Trent to the See of Lichfield." Far the most important results were those to six parishes which had their incomes materially increased. The parish of Harts-hill received £5246 10s. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ per cent Consols; that of Penkhull, £5065 7s.; that of Trent Vale,

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£5636 10s.; that of Fenton, £4151 15s.; that of St. John's, Hanley, £7500; that of St. John's, Longton, £5784; making a grand total of £33,384 2s., 2¾ per cent Consols, which amount of stock was paid out of the Stoke Rectory Fund.

This last sentence is by itself sufficient to show the generosity of the whole Act. It is delightful to find that, in spite of some hostile criticisms on the part of a few who might very well have been expected to have understood the Rector of Stoke's character better, his action was warmly applauded by many friends to whom he sent a detailed explanation of what had been brought about by the Act.

One friend wrote: "I can only say this, that if they had had most men to deal with your opponents would have found that the business would have ended very differently. I wonder you did not throw the whole thing up. I am sure I should. I think you have acted most generously." Dr. Bickersteth, Dean of Lichfield, sent the following letter:—

"The Deanery, Lichfield,
September 7, 1889.

My dear Bishop,

Very many thanks for your kindness in having sent me your little brochures *in re* Stoke

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Rectory. How generous and disinterested you have been throughout, but that you always are! It will, I am sure, be a great relief to you when all this is settled.

Pray believe me always

truly and affectionately yours,

EDWARD BICKERSTETH, D.D."

A brother Bishop wrote in reference to the whole question, "It has been nobly and unselfishly done," while the late Lord Harrowby described it as "this great boon which you have bestowed upon the vast population around you," and added, "I do most heartily congratulate you, and I feel that the county owes you a great debt." Many other letters might be quoted—especially a warmly congratulatory one from his own chief (Dr. Maclagan)—but these will be sufficient to show what was thought of the Stoke Rectory Act by those who, unaffected by local prejudices, saw the great benefits that it conferred.

The Dean of Rochester, Dr. Lane, who knew Sir Lovelace Stamer well, and who succeeded him in his Archdeaconry, has written a short appreciation of him, in the course of which he says :—

"The noblest act of his devoted, self-denying ministry, however, was his surrender of the great

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living of Stoke-upon-Trent to the patronage of the Bishop of Lichfield, and the partition of a large proportion of its endowments and funds among daughter and neighbouring parishes. I suppose that the Bishop of Shrewsbury himself took great pains that it should be done as quietly as possible, but it is astonishing that more was not made of its magnificent generosity at the time. I remember when the Bill was on the point of passing the Houses of Parliament that I was sitting next (at an old Balliol dinner) to a contemporary, and old friend of mine, Sir Joseph Warner, who was legal adviser or Drafter of Bills in the House of Lords, and he said to me: 'I say, do you know the Bishop of Shrewsbury?' 'Yes,' I said, 'I am glad to say I do.' 'Well,' he said, 'what a grand fellow he must be! I think that Stoke Rectory Bill is quite the noblest bit of self-surrender that I ever came across!''

CHAPTER XV

STOKE CURATES

THIRTY years ago scarcely any training ground for Curates could compare with that of Stoke-upon-Trent. That young man esteemed himself lucky who obtained a title from Sir Lovelace Stamer. He probably arrived with a certain amount of trepidation, for it was widely known that the Rector would not for a moment brook slackness of any kind, but, if he proved himself a worker, he left with the certainty that he had obtained in Sir Lovelace Stamer a friend for life. A man once told a friend that he was going to be one of the Stoke Curates. "Are you?" was the reply. "Well, I lived there once, and used often to see a couple of young Curates hurrying up the street, and the Rector after them with a big stick!" The words were not meant to be taken literally, but they conveyed a warning all the same. It was not unnatural. A tremendous worker himself, he expected his staff to follow in his footsteps.

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His system with a new-comer was to appear to leave him very much to his own devices. "There is your district and your work," he would say, "now go and do it." After a few months he would appear on the scene again, and manage to meet the curate somewhere in the streets. Walking along by his side, he would suddenly point to a passer-by and say, "Where does that man live?" or "What is that child's name?" and so satisfy himself as to whether the beginner was learning to know the inhabitants of the district. He himself had a marvellous memory for people, and from his own experience had found the value of such knowledge. The Rev. H. Coldham (Vicar of St. Jude's, Stoke-upon-Trent), who was twice Curate to Sir Lovelace, writes :—

"I was conscious from his encouraging words as well as from his decidedly practical questions that he had his eye upon me, and was really watching my work with the aim of keeping me up to the performance of duty, and helping me to know how to do my work more efficiently. I have often thought since that his was a good plan. I had to find my own way about, and so one was trained to be self-reliant; but, on the other hand, I was quite conscious of a sense of responsibility to the Rector, as well as of the presence of a sympathising friend

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to whom I could appeal at any time for advice or help.

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“ He was keenly interested in the Church Schools of his Parish, and expected his assistant clergy to be diligent in taking part in the religious instruction that was appointed to be given in them. . . .

“ He was a thorough believer in regular visiting of the people by the Clergy, and never lost an opportunity of pressing its importance on his curates. ‘ Get to know the people ’—‘ Make them feel that you care for them as a friend as well as a Pastor ’—these were his mottoes.”

In many letters that have been lovingly preserved by former curates there is evidence of the way in which, while committing the work of their districts to them, he was himself conversant with the smallest details, and thought nothing beneath his notice. Thus, in letters written by him in 1887 and 1888 to the Rev. J. E. Walker, at that time one of his staff and now Vicar of St. Chad's, West Coseley, he goes into details about a children's tea to commemorate the Queen's jubilee, mentioning what he thought their bags of provisions ought to contain, and saying that he should like to see a sample of the mug to be given to each child; and

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in the following year interests himself in the preparations for a bazaar to be held for the district of All Saints', Boother. It may be added that he wrote a short history of this Mission, which was one of the earliest that he set on foot, for the programme of this bazaar. It was the same in every case. No Curate ever felt that the district of which he had charge was beyond the ken of the Rector, and none ever had reason to think that in after days the work of that particular spot was forgotten. In the very last year of the Bishop's life he wrote to Mr. Bridgwood (Vicar of Forsbrook) on the occasion of the Dedication Festival of Basford, a district formed by Sir Lovelace in 1878, recalling memories of the "first Celebration in the modest little building which was the commencement of the Church's work there."

One more reference to the Rector's power of inciting his Curates to hard work must be given. Prebendary Waters, now Vicar of Holy Trinity, Hanley, and a former Curate of Stoke, says that he soon felt that Sir Lovelace was a leader to serve under, and one whose untiring energy and devotion to his work as Parish Priest and Pastor was a continual example and incentive to his Curates and helpers.

But this was only one side of his relations with

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his Curates. He was their chief, but he was also their father. Anything like the personal affection and interest that he bestowed upon them can have seldom been experienced. And this lasted all through his life. He never forgot where any one of them was working, what his special needs were, what his family cares might be, the names of his children, or indeed anything relating to them. This is proved by the many letters which the present writer has been privileged to read, but space for which unfortunately cannot be found. It may be surely affirmed that so long as any of Sir Lovelace's Curates live they will look back with reverence and love to that sturdy genial chieftain who led them on to great endeavours, and at the same time cared for them almost as his sons.

The mention of his sturdy figure recalls a little story that is still remembered by an old Curate. The Bishop of Lichfield (Dr. Maclagan), who was a man with a small spare frame, had one year paid a visit for some ceremony near Leek. The next year Bishop Stamer visited the same place, and an old woman was heard to say, "Bishop's got main lusty since last year!"

But to return to Sir Lovelace's relations with his Curates, nothing better can be quoted than the contribution to the memorial number of the

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“Stoke Parish Magazine” written by Canon How, now Vicar of Meltham. He said :—

“Thirty years ago Sir Lovelace Stamer was staying with my father in Shropshire. After breakfast one morning he walked round the garden with me and spoke, as so many of us have heard him speak, of the happiness of the life of a Clergyman. I went straight to my father and said, ‘I want to be Sir Lovelace Stamer’s Curate.’ Then it was settled that I should begin my ministry at Stoke. I cannot express my thankfulness for having been allowed to be trained in such a school. What did it mean? It meant that we had constantly before us an example of strenuous work and devotion to duty. This was by itself a very great help; but we soon found that the Rector was more to us, for he showed us that he trusted us, and he gave us true affection. Occasionally he would show us something of his inner life, and we learned how much he trusted to Prayer. In all things he was *real*.

“I could write much of all that I remember about him. Some things stand out in my memory. One is an occasion when he addressed a number of business men of Stoke with intense courage and earnestness on the subject of ‘Purity.’ I can see him now as he was then, somewhat ‘strung-up,’

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but speaking with such conviction that his words went right home to every man's conscience. . . .

"Those who worked under him will remember his deep grief when he heard of any parishioner who had fallen into sin, and how he immediately would suggest some means whereby the person could be helped to repentance. At the same time his whole face would shine with joy when he heard of any success. I will only mention his public work to say that it was most evident that this work, whether on the School Board or the Infirmary Committee, or whatever it might be, was always to him a deeply religious work. He went to it with the same strong sense of duty with which he did everything. . . .

"One last personal word. Since I left Stoke no joy or sorrow has entered my life without my receiving from him one of his own peculiarly helpful letters. We can never be grateful enough for having been given such a Friend and such a Father. Our work and lives must be better for having known him."

Yet another side to Sir Lovelace's character as it impressed his curates has been brought to notice by Prebendary Penny, Vicar of Wolverhampton. This was his quick insight into anything that occurred in his parish or to which his attention was called. It was wonderful how rapidly he put in an

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appearance if anything went wrong. He seemed to have information by some kind of telepathy and was on the spot at once. He was just as quick at diagnosing a case, and gave his opinion promptly, regardless of the sentiments of his hearers, and this he was able to do without giving offence. He would appear at a meeting where some scheme had been laboriously elaborated. In ten minutes he would have it all swept away and a new programme drawn out without any one's feelings being hurt.

There is a story told illustrating his rapidity of decision, but it is in its want of consideration for the other person concerned so unlike Bishop Stamer that it must have been "improved out of knowledge." However, it is worth telling and must be accepted "*cum grano*." The story goes that he once went to the station to meet a young man who was desirous of joining his staff at Stoke. The Rector shook hands, gave the man a good look, and then said, "I am so glad to have seen you. If you will cross over to the other side you will be just in time to catch a train which will take you back!"

Whether this story is founded on fact or not, there is no doubt that Sir Lovelace had a gift for selecting the right kind of man. He did not try for great scholars or men of any specially showy attainments. What he wanted was workers, and he

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got them. Himself a man of the unaffected kind who put simple duty first—the sort of men who in their different spheres have made England great—he chose like-minded men as his assistants. There was need of such men. So long ago as the time when Canon How was curate, he relates that there were always nineteen services in the parish on a Sunday to be taken by the Rector and his nine curates, and the weekday work was incessant. North Staffordshire can congratulate itself to-day upon the steadfast work upon old Stoke lines which is being done by numbers of parish clergymen who received their training from Sir Lovelace Stamer. A short time before he left Stoke the number who had done so amounted to sixty, and when he was holding an ordination in the interregnum between Bishops Maclagan and Legge, he mentioned this fact in an address to the candidates. One of them was heard afterwards to say, “What a crusty old chap he must be for no curate to stay with him!” not realising the size of the staff at Stoke Parish Church.

Not many great distinctions have been conferred upon the old curates of Stoke. One (Churton) became Bishop of Nassau, another (Hodgson) became Archdeacon of Stafford and Residentiary Canon of Lichfield; and the greatest man of all

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(George Fowler) was Vice-Principal of Wells Theological College, and then Principal of Leeds Clergy School, where he died.

This is probably the proper place to mention a most interesting gathering of the clergy who had worked with Sir Lovelace Stamer at Stoke. He had long cherished the idea, and it finally took shape in November, 1886.

On Wednesday and Thursday, November 11th and 12th, between thirty and forty former curates assembled at the bidding of their old Rector. On the first evening sermons were preached in the Parish Church and in the following district churches, viz. All Saints', Boothern; St. Paul's, Mount Pleasant; St. Jude's, Cliff Vale; Berry Hill; and St. Mark's, Basford; the congregation at each having the pleasure of listening once more to one whom they had known in days gone by. On the following morning all were present at a Celebration in the Parish Church, and in the evening of that day a social gathering of Church Folk was held in the Town Hall to meet the former curates.

It must have been a great pleasure to Sir Lovelace to find himself surrounded by so many dear old friends, and to receive the many letters that came to him afterwards to tell of the pleasure he had given to his guests. One who wrote said,

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“The happy reunion of old friends at Stoke seems almost like a dream to look back upon”; and another, “I was unable to say good night to you and to thank you for two of the happiest days in my life. I shall not soon forget that meeting in the Town Hall. All were so hearty and enthusiastic. One result of Wednesday and Thursday is that I am determined myself to work with more energy than before.”

Of all the many works by which Sir Lovelace Stamer earned the gratitude of the Church there is not one that can be placed before that of the training of her clergy. The Bishop of Lichfield recognised this when he spoke of the loss that would be sustained in the matter of the training of deacons when Sir Lovelace Stamer left Stoke.

CHAPTER XVI

DEPARTURE FROM STOKE

IN 1891 came one of the great changes to which the life of a Suffragan Bishop must always be subject. The Bishop of Lichfield (Dr. Maclagan) was appointed to the Archbishopric of York, and so Sir Lovelace Stamer had to face the anxieties accompanying a change of chief—anxieties which form a powerful argument in favour of an increase of Territorial rather than of Suffragan Bishops. The Bishop of Shrewsbury knew neither whether the next bishop of the diocese would be willing to retain his services, nor whether he would be one with whom he would find himself sufficiently in agreement to make it possible for the old arrangement to continue. It must, then, have been a satisfaction to him when, in July, he received a letter from the Rev. the Hon. Augustus Legge, at that time Vicar of Lewisham, and Bishop-elect of Lichfield, begging him to undertake all en-

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gagements already arranged until the end of the year.

The new Bishop's responsibility for the diocese was not to begin until September 29th, and it would not be possible for him to conduct the September Ordination. He therefore asked the Bishop of Shrewsbury to ordain in his place. As at first arranged the Ordination was to have taken place just before Bishop Legge's consecration, but it was found that the Archbishop of Canterbury could not commission a *Suffragan* Bishop to ordain. Consequently the date had to be postponed until the Sunday after the new Bishop's Consecration, when, as Bishop of the diocese, he was able to commission his own Suffragan to do so. The occasion was one of great interest and pleasure to the Bishop of Shrewsbury, and there are letters in existence which show how greatly his ministrations were appreciated. In particular he received one from Bishop Legge, thanking him "for the way in which you have taken charge of the Ordination, and carried it through with so much blessing to all concerned."

It does not seem, however, that it was absolutely settled for some little time that Sir Lovelace should retain his position as Bishop Suffragan. It is true that on October 3rd, Bishop Legge writing to him

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from Lewisham, and referring to the Ordination at Lichfield on the following day, said, "I am pleased to think that I have you for a colleague. May God be with you to-day and to-morrow, and bless your words and the service." But a letter from the late Bishop Abraham has been preserved from which it can be gathered that the matter was not definitely determined until towards the middle of November. The letter is valuable as showing the esteem in which the Bishop of Shrewsbury was held by leading Churchmen in the diocese. Here it is :—

"11 *Beacon St.*, 12 *Nov.*, 1891.

My dear Bishop,

I cannot tell you what a relief your letter is to me. I was greatly afraid that the Diocesan would part with your services before he knew the requirements of the Diocese or your value. And then I further felt the slight that would have been put upon you in the eyes of *other* Dioceses, though no one in *this* would have for a moment considered you and your work discredited. But after all you had sacrificed to please the late Bishop—and after the generous spirit in which you had made over the advowson of your Rectory to the Church of the Diocese—it would have deeply pained your many

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friends to have seen you set aside so unceremoniously.

All this, I thank God for it, has been spared you and us, and the Diocese will now have the benefit of your counsel and frequent supervision. I only trust the Bishop will take you into his confidence, and use the large experience you can bring to his help.

Believe me,

Ever your affec. friend and brother,

C. J. ABRAHAM, Bp."

But further and still greater changes, so far as the Bishop of Shrewsbury was concerned, were coming on apace. It became increasingly clear to the Bishop himself and to all who knew him that even his great physical and constitutional strength would not much longer endure the strain of the double work of Suffragan Bishop and Rector of a huge parish. The new Bishop of Lichfield seems to have very quickly grasped this fact, for early in the following year (1892) he proposed that the Bishop of Shrewsbury should go to the vacant living of St. Chad's, Shrewsbury. This would entail a large loss of income, but the Rectory of Edgmond, in Shropshire, then held by Archdeacon

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Lloyd, had been designed as an endowment for a Suffragan Bishop, and the Archdeacon proposed to pay a portion of the income for that purpose so long as he was Rector, it being understood that on his death or resignation the Suffragan Bishop would succeed to the Rectory. In proof of this there is a passage in a letter from the late Bishop Abraham on the subject of the proposed change, in which he warns Sir Lovelace that he must be prepared to face the possibility that the Rector of Edgmond might not always be Archdeacon Lloyd, and that a new Rector (if Sir Lovelace remained at St. Chad's) might not be willing to pay over part of the income. As a matter of fact it was Bishop Abraham's great desire that the Bishop of Shrewsbury should become Dean of Lichfield, the Deanery falling vacant in May of that year. Writing on May 15th he said :—

“ My dear Bishop,

Probably you have heard what Mrs. Bickersteth tells me, that the Dean has resigned his office. . . .

My earnest desire is that Lord Salisbury would make *you* Dean. It would be a gracious recognition of your services to the Diocese and the Church. But I fear you don't like anything akin to canvassing

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for such a post. Well, we can do one thing, that is to pray the Great Head of the Church to put into the Premier's heart what is most for the glory of the Church.

Yrs. ever affect.,

C. J. A., Bp."

But to return to the Bishop of Lichfield's proposal as to St. Chad's, Shrewsbury. There seem to have been difficulties in the way which at first appeared insuperable. But Bishop Legge did not give up hope. Writing from Chesterfield on April 24th, 1892, he said :—

“ My dear Bishop,

I opened your letter with anxious hope this morning, and certainly with the wish that you could have seen your way to accepting St. Chad's ; but it apparently is not to be.

Let me say, however, what is in my mind, if I can put my thoughts into some sort of order, and make them intelligible.

First, then, it is a happiness to me to feel that Stoke, and practically the Pottery district, are under your guidance and influence, and I could wish you never to move. The only regret I ever feel about it (from a Diocesan point of view) is that it prevents

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you from undertaking the training of deacons, and so far I think that the Diocese is a loser.

Secondly. After your noble life's work there, I feel strongly that your labours should have received more public recognition at the hand of the authorities than they have done, and I have expressed the opinion in quarters of influence.

Thirdly. You certainly have a claim to relinquish the toils of Stoke whenever you feel that less constant anxiety would bring you relief, and make your episcopal work less onerous.

Fourthly. To come to the future—I am so strongly impressed with the conviction that, if you are to leave Stoke, your leadership would be of inestimable value to Shrewsbury, which sorely needs a strong and wise leader, that I should be even now sorry to relinquish all hope of your going there.

.

I am sure that you will look at this important question all round, and may God guide us to a right conclusion !

Believe me,

Yrs. affectly.,

AUGUSTUS LICHFIELD."

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Actuated no doubt partly by this letter, the Bishop of Shrewsbury made up his mind that the call to St. Chad's was one that he could not well refuse, and early in the month of June the decision was made. He had proof of the pleasure he thus gave to the Bishop of Lichfield in a letter from a personal friend, in the course of which the following passage occurred :

“ I was with our Bishop when your final decision reached him, and it would have gladdened you to see what a relief it brought to his mind. You will be a missed man at Stoke, but Shrewsbury at this time needs a head, and you will do a great work there if God spares you, and in this thought I rejoice.”

As soon as it was known that Sir Lovelace Stamer was about to leave Stoke letters poured in, some of congratulation, but more of regret. Before, however, referring to any of these, the letter must be quoted which he himself sent to all his parishioners, and to many outside friends.

“ My dear People,

I make haste to acquaint you with an important decision to which I have been led within the last day or two, lest, perchance, it should reach you indirectly and uncertainly, when you are en-

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titled to hear it in the first instance and authoritatively from myself.

The conviction has been growing upon me that I am no longer equal to the burden of this great Parish (population 21,600, 4 Churches, 5 School Churches and Mission Rooms, and 5 Schools with 12 Departments), with the many anxieties that attend it, and that I ought to make way for a younger man, for your sake no less than for my own.

A certain provision having been unexpectedly created for the support of the Bishop Suffragan, the Bishop of Lichfield has advised me that I can best serve the Diocese by accepting it and removing to Shrewsbury; and he has further persuaded me to undertake the charge of the Parish of St. Chad (population 3,500, one Church and one group of Schools) which is shortly about to be vacant.

After very careful consideration, and guided, I humbly trust, by a higher Power, I have concluded to do this, and in the course of the next three months I shall cease to be Rector of Stoke.

I can very imperfectly realise at this moment all that this means to me and mine, after a connection so sacred and so happy extending over thirty-four years.

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But I feel that it is best that I should retire before your interests begin to suffer. Ever since I was consecrated Bishop—now more than four years ago—I have been aware that the calls which the Diocese made upon my time and strength encroached upon my obligations to you ; and in the endeavour to compensate for this I have laid upon myself a strain which neither mind nor body can much longer bear ; for, though I have had most loyal and helpful colleagues in my ministry, the ultimate direction and responsibility have necessarily rested upon me.

In leaving you it is my chief ground of confidence to know that the appointment of my successor will be with the Bishop of the Diocese ; and you may rest assured that it will have his most patient and careful consideration. You must pray for him that he may be rightly guided in his choice, and I shall look forward to both hearing and seeing that God's work is prospering among you beyond anything that we have hitherto known. For, happily, I am not going very far away ; and, as Bishop Suffragan, I may be called upon from time to time to exercise my office in my dear old parish. This is not to say Farewell, but to prepare you for my saying it. Before the time for that comes, you will, I trust, let me know that you approve of the course

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I am taking, and assure me that I shall have your prayers for a blessing for the remaining years of my ministry in the far less burdensome, but still very real and serious, post of duty, to which by the Will of God, as I am persuaded, and by the desire of our Bishop, I am retiring.

Believe me to be,

Your affectionate friend and servant

in Jesus Christ,

LOVELACE T. SHREWSBURY.

June 13th, 1892."

In order properly to appreciate the above letter, it should be realised how intensely moved the Bishop of Shrewsbury must have been at this juncture in his career. Stoke-upon-Trent was more to him than an ordinary parish is to most incumbents, for it meant to him then and always what is contained in the word "home." Bearing this in mind, and remembering the warmth of the Bishop's affections and his partly Celtic origin, the unselfish restraint of the letter is remarkable. Just one sentence is allowed to express a little of his personal feeling. For the rest, his unselfish desire for his people's welfare inspires the whole.

It has been said that letters poured in. From Stoke itself came some that gave expression to the

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wish that still lurks in the heart of a few of the old parishioners, that Sir Lovelace Stamer had never looked higher than the position he held as Rector of Stoke, and unconsecrated Bishop of the Potteries. One example of such letters may be given. It was from Mr. Geen, one of Stoke's leading citizens, and ran as follows :—

“ 16th June, 1892.

My dear Bishop,

I have received your circular letter with very mixed feelings, and I cannot tell you how much I regret your decision to leave your ‘ dear old Parish.’ I have felt for some time that your Diocesan and Parish work was almost too much for you, and as one of your old parishioners I sincerely wish that you had decided to keep to the latter and relinquish the former. But as the reverse is the case I hope and pray that God will bless your work for the remaining years (which I trust may be many) ‘ of your ministry ’ in a degree at least equal to that of the past, and if He does so then I am sure that many souls will be won for the Master.

I am, my dear Bishop,

Yrs. faithfully,

FREDERICK GEEN.”

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From outside friends came invariably an expression of pleasure that the great strain which had begun to tell upon the Bishop was to be in some degree relaxed. The Archbishop of York (Dr. Maclagan) wrote to tell his former Suffragan that he had no doubt whatever that he was doing right, while at the same time he felt what a severe wrench the move would be. But the feeling in many quarters of Stoke was that it was a pity that their Rector had ever undertaken any work which would necessitate his severance from the great position he had so long held in that neighbourhood. One friend who had special opportunities of observing Sir Lovelace has given it as his opinion that the Bishop was never the same man again after leaving Stoke, and that some at least of his strong and independent spirit appeared to depart from that date.

What was the Bishop's own idea of the responsibilities and dignity of the office of Rector of Stoke may be gathered from an extract from his Farewell Letter to his parishioners. "The position," he wrote, "of Rector of Stoke is unique, certainly in this Diocese, for the magnitude of the interests entrusted to him. . . .

"He need not wish any higher office—it is a Bishopric in itself : no dignity within his reach can give him a better title to respect."

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From the columns of the "Staffordshire Sentinel" some idea may be gathered of the estimation placed upon Sir Lovelace Stamer's work at Stoke by the general public. Immediately his resignation was announced that paper had a couple of leading articles on the subject. After saying that congratulations to the Bishop on being relieved from some of his onerous duties were not altogether out of place, the first of these articles concluded with the words, "But the uppermost feeling in every heart, we are equally satisfied, is one of sincere regret that a district like our own, which stands so much in need of the service of high-minded and broad-minded public men, should lose the presence and the aid of a clergyman and a neighbour whose delight it has been to dwell among his people, and, as he saw the right and proper thing to do, to further it with all his might in the interests of his parishioners."

The second article, after summarising the various undertakings to which the Bishop had mainly devoted himself during his thirty-four years at Stoke, put into words a certain side of his broad-minded character in a striking manner. It reads thus: "It is perhaps more open to us to express what we believe is the universal feeling entertained regarding Bishop Stamer outside Church circles. It is one

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of universal and unquestioned respect, and of high admiration of his sound common sense, and shrewd and sober judgment. In the controversies in which he has been engaged, he has so eliminated all personal elements, and has brought his guns to bear so entirely on practical issues, that among his critics, or maybe his opponents, he can have no enemy. . . .

“It is, as every Churchman and Educationist as well as every Nonconformist in Stoke must recognise, a good deal more than the language of compliment when we say that Bishop Stamer has so impressed himself upon Stoke, that it will be exceedingly difficult to fill his place by the appointment, we shall not say of any single man, but of any ordinary two or three.”

It is hardly necessary to record that various meetings were held to express regret at the Bishop's departure, and to suggest means of doing him honour: The Churchwardens summoned the Parochial Council at once for this purpose, and there was not a body with which the Rector of Stoke had been connected that did not do the same. He specially valued the resolution passed on the occasion by the Town Council, with which he had been in touch as Chaplain to the Mayor ever since the incorporation of the Borough.

The parishioners of Stoke presented him, at a

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meeting presided over by the new Rector (Rev. J. H. Crump), with an Address which, beautifully illustrated, formed a pictorial record of the Bishop's undertakings since he came to Stoke, and, as a substantial accompaniment to the gift, with a promise to complete the reredos in the parish church. His curates, eight in number, gave him a prie-dieu for his private use, on which was inscribed a beautiful and original Latin inscription, of which the following is a translation :—

To the Reverend Father in God

The Friend of his younger Brethren, the Pastor of the
Shepherds,

Sir L. T. Stamer, Baronet, D.D.

on his exchanging the riches of St. Peter's for the poverty of St. Chad's and passing from the Potteries of the Trent to the country of the Severn, Being by the Grace of God successively Rector, Rural Dean, Archdeacon and Bishop,

To the man, above all, who so earnestly called his
people to private family and Public Prayers,

This Prie-Dieu, as suitable to one who illustrated his teaching by his practice, was presented by his Fellow-workers in his Parish

Presbyters in the Church of God

as a token of their gratitude and lasting remembrance.

Michaelmas, 1892.

In the December following the Bishop came from Shrewsbury to receive a parting gift from the

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clergy of the Archdeaconry of Stoke. The presentation took place at the house of his old friend, Prebendary Hutchinson, Vicar of Blurton, a fact that added much to the Bishop's pleasure. About thirty of the clergy attended in person on Monday, December 12th, and the Rev. Sanford Hutchinson has written the following account of what took place.

“The object of the gathering was to present to his Lordship a massive silver inkstand, with candlesticks and pen-tray to match, together with seven volumes of Ruskin's works, in handsome calf antique binding. A Latin inscription, composed by Bishop Abraham, was engraved on the inkstand, and a mitre with the initials L. T. S. on each silver piece. After a few words of welcome from Prebendary Hutchinson, who had acted as honorary secretary, the presentation was made by the Venerable Archdeacon Lane (now Dean of Rochester) with all the courtesy and erudition for which he is so remarkable, and the Bishop feelingly responded.”

Yet one more gift must be recorded here, though it could not be presented until the following April. It consisted of a portrait of the Bishop in his robes, painted by the Hon. John Collier, and was given by “some of his friends in North Staffordshire.” It

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was distinctly a gathering of laity that met under the presidency of Mr. Godfrey Wedgwood at the North Stafford Hotel at Stoke to make the presentation, and it was a great source of pleasure to the Bishop to receive this pledge of the appreciation and friendship of the laymen of the district, as he had already of his clerical brethren, apart from the delight which both he and his family took in a painting which was not only a good picture, but a most excellent portrait.

It now becomes necessary to turn over an entirely new page in the life of Sir Lovelace Stamer, and it cannot be done without a certain sense of sadness. No one who is conversant with his career can doubt for a moment that the great work of his life was that which he accomplished as Rector of Stoke-upon-Trent. It was there that he laboured when his vast strength of mind and body was at its zenith. Upon it he poured out the fullest measure of his love. It is there that his body now rests after all his labours. However interesting the remaining years of his life and his episcopal work, it is with Stoke that his name will ever be coupled in the history of the work of the Church of England. It may be noted in conclusion that although Church people in Stoke may have felt that the pillar upon which their whole edifice rested was being removed, Sir Lovelace

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Stamer's work was too surely founded for disaster to follow his departure. From generation to generation the influence of his labours and teaching will survive, not alone in Stoke, but in the whole district of the Potteries, where, as Bishop Legge once said, it is most striking to find the number of clergy who are carrying on the traditions in their parishes which they learnt at the feet of Sir Lovelace Stamer.

CHAPTER XVII

LIFE AND WORK IN SHREWSBURY

IT cannot be denied that the Bishop of Shrewsbury's departure from Stoke marked the close of his greatest work, and the most interesting portion of his life. Although not what would be called nowadays a really old man, yet he was just sixty-three, and at last the immense strain to which he had for so long subjected his great powers of mind and body had begun to tell. It was time that he should have a change of life, and, although at first he had been anxious to undertake no further parochial work, yet it was probably a certain satisfaction to him still to have the care of a parish, and no doubt it helped to make the break in his life less severe.

To him the move from the smoke and dreary surroundings of Stoke to the beautiful old town of Shrewsbury, from the perpetual movement and turmoil of a manufacturing centre to the quieter

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and more soporific if purer atmosphere of the place from which he took his title, meant far less of pleasure than it would to most men. Stoke was fair to him with that fairness with which a man endows a beloved one. The streets might be dull and the houses with no pretence to beauty, but there was scarcely a dwelling in which he had not had at one time or other a friend, and into which he had not taken a message of peace and comfort. For all that, if change was to come, none more delightful could have presented itself than that which he made in the autumn of 1892.

The parishioners of St Chad's, Shrewsbury, were soon initiated into some of their new Vicar's ways. He was not to be instituted until October 11th, but he could not wait till then to send them one of his characteristic outspoken letters. So, on September 26th, he wrote to them as follows :—

“ Dear Friends,

Although I have not yet formally been placed in charge of St. Chad's, I have been for so long before your minds as Vicar-nominate, that I feel I may properly address you even as ‘ Friends ’ in the pages of your Magazine, which will be current at the date of my Institution, and say some things

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which may tend to a good understanding between us from the very first.

When I made up my mind that I ought to retire from Stoke (by far the largest Parish in the Diocese), and make way for a younger and more capable man, I had no intention of resuming Parochial work. It was thought by those who were most competent to counsel me that, for what remained to me of life and strength, I could best serve the Church by settling at Shrewsbury—my See-town—from thence to discharge whatever duties our Bishop might assign to me as his Suffragan. But at the moment when this change was impending, the vacancy in your own parish was declared, and the proposal was made to me that I should fill it. This, after careful consideration and good advice, I consented to do. For I realised the importance of the post—the ‘Metropolitan’ Parish of Shrewsbury, as I have heard it called. And I knew that my predecessor had set on foot good work which, it might be, God was calling me to carry forward. And, though I foresaw that there would be many interruptions, in consequence of my Diocesan engagements, I felt that these would be made good if I brought with me two efficient priests to help me, so that practically the Parish would be served by three Clergy, instead of two as heretofore.

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Since this decision has been come to all my wants have been happily supplied. I am fortunate in the Clergy whom I am bringing with me ; one, my own son, Rev. R. D. Stamer, who has obtained a good report as Curate for three and a half years at the Parish Church, Leek ; and the other, the Rev. R. H. Craft, who has rendered to me valuable help at Stoke. I ask you to give them both a kind welcome.

I have found a home within the Parish, which at one time seemed doubtful, and as near to the Church as Quarry Place, while for the assistant Clergy I have secured the house which has been so long the residence of the Vicar, though it is not the Vicarage. In this way I hope that every appointment, in the Church and without it, will be kept, and the Parish thoroughly visited by the Clergy in all its parts.

Already I have had the privilege of conferring with the Churchwardens, and I have good reason to believe that our relations will be as close and cordial as they ought to be for the well-being of the Church and Parish. . . .

I am aware that your Elementary Schools are in a critical condition. I trust it may be given me, with your hearty co-operation, to place them on a footing of efficiency and solvency. It would be nothing

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short of a reproach to St. Chad's, as well as a severe check to the hopeful work of the Church in the Parish, if they were to pass from under our immediate care and control. . . .

With hopeful and happy anticipations that you will receive me as one coming to you in the Name of the Lord, to exercise for a while amongst you 'the Ministry of Reconciliation,'

I remain,

Your faithful servant in Christ,

LOVELACE T. SHREWSBURY."

There are one or two points in this letter that need a little expansion. The arrival of his son Reginald to work with him as his curate was a red-letter day in the life of the Bishop, and went a long way towards reconciling him to the loss of so much that went out of his life on leaving Stoke. So far as the Bishop permitted to himself any preferences among his children this may be said to have been his favourite son, and certainly was the one who had most interests in common with his father. He remained his curate at St. Chad's, and then at Edgmond, until the spring of 1900, when he accepted a living.

The Bishop's reference to his acquisition of a

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suitable house brings to mind the fact that for some time he was in negotiation for the Whitehall, formerly the residence of Archdeacon Lloyd, a singularly beautiful old house, but situated at the further end of the town from St. Chad's, and not so convenient in its arrangements or its situation as the house in Quarry Place.

Thirdly, it may be mentioned that the fact that the St. Chad's Schools were in a precarious condition—to which further reference must be made—served (so it is said) to clinch the Bishop's decision to take the vacant living, acting like a trumpet-call to one who had fought so hard and so successfully for education all the years of his ministry.

It was unfortunate, though, considering all that he had just gone through, not a matter of surprise, that on the Bishop's arrival at Shrewsbury he should have felt in less robust health than usual. The day of his Institution was, however, at hand, and he would not give way to his premonitory symptoms of illness. Before the service took place a large and representative gathering of the parishioners of St. Chad's assembled under the presidency of the Mayor of Shrewsbury (E. C. Peele, Esq.) in the Working Men's Hall, to give a welcome to their new Vicar. The Mayor made a good historical point

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in his speech by referring to the tradition that in the reign of Henry VIII the people of Shrewsbury were too proud to have a Bishop. Now, he said, they had grown wiser, and were only too proud to have a Bishop among them. In the name of the old town he gave the Bishop a hearty welcome.

The late Archdeacon Lloyd expressed the pleasure the clergy felt in having one to live among them who would be their natural leader, Shrewsbury having for some time laboured under the disadvantage of having no special ecclesiastical head. The churchwardens gave voice to the welcome of the parish, and then the Bishop gave an address, in the course of which he described the circumstances which had brought about his acceptance of the living. He struck a note of some sadness by saying that he came to them with diminished strength, and concluded by referring to what Archdeacon Lloyd had said about his taking the ecclesiastical leadership in the town. He hoped they would not say that he had come to set things straight ; on the contrary, he came simply to continue that pastoral work which had been the joy of his life, and he wished to assure his brother clergy that the last thing he should desire would be to take any precedence of those who had been in the town for

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years, and whose title to lead the clergy was gained by past services. He desired to be considered as one of the clergy, and hoped his coming to the town would not turn things upside down. He ended by thanking them warmly for the welcome they had given him.

After the meeting was over, there was an adjournment to St. Chad's Church, where Bishop Stamer was instituted to the Cure of Souls by the Bishop of Lichfield, and inducted into the temporalities of the benefice by Archdeacon Lloyd. Bishop Legge, in the course of a beautiful and impressive address, took occasion to remind his hearers of the past services which Bishop Stamer had rendered to the Church. He told them that they were greatly privileged in that parish, and it would certainly be a source of happiness and blessing to them to have one to take charge of their souls who could bring in that wide experience to bear upon the work of the parish, which none could bring to so full an extent as the Bishop of Shrewsbury, who took charge of them that evening. He felt sure that they would accord to Bishop Stamer their respect, their obedience, and their affection. They would accord to him, first, respect on account of his office: they would respect him as their Parish Priest, called to come and preach the Word

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of God amongst them—but they would respect him also for his personal character, and for what he had brought with him, viz. the love of perhaps the most populous and most important parish in the Diocese. . . .

And he felt sure that ere long they would give him their affection as well as their respect and obedience : he would soon win their hearts.

Then, turning to the Bishop of Shrewsbury, Bishop Legge alluded in feeling terms to the relations that had existed between them. His heart, he said, was full of gratitude to the Bishop of Shrewsbury, because he had given up a home occupied for so many years, and a work that was very dear to him, in order that he might labour for the good of the Church in another part of the Diocese. He had undertaken the charge of souls at St. Chad's at considerable loss in many ways to himself, but he felt it was a duty to come and give his life for the good of the people in St. Chad's parish. The Bishop of Lichfield ended by begging the people to pray for their new Vicar that God would give him strength in body and zeal to impart the wisdom of God, that so they might have cause to say, "Thank God that He has sent you here."

Almost as soon as this rather tiring day was over

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Bishop Stamer was taken seriously ill with an attack of lumbago which confined him to his bed for some time, and unfortunately postponed his personal appearance in his new parish. It was only by the exercise of considerable pluck that he got through the long service as he did. He appeared so unwell that the Bishop of Lichfield begged him to retire, but with his usual courage he declined to do so.

Just as on his first undertaking the parish of Stoke, so now at St. Chad's, Sir Lovelace moved with great caution, being specially anxious not to disturb the minds of his parishioners by any sudden changes. It is rather curious to notice that the only immediate alteration in the services was to return to the rather more old-fashioned plan of requiring the congregation to remain in church until after the prayer for the Church Militant on those Sundays when there was a midday celebration of the Holy Communion, instead of the practice which then obtained of having Morning Prayer and sermon, and then dismissing those who did not wish to remain for the Communion Service.

One of the parishioners of St. Chad's, Mr. W. Gowen Cross, writing about the Bishop's arrival in that parish says: "It was with somewhat mixed feelings that we learned that Bishop Stamer was

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to be our new Vicar. We owed a deep debt of gratitude to his predecessor, the Rev. E. Stanley Carpenter, for the intrepid way in which he had inaugurated a new order of things, and it was rumoured that some portion or other of the newly gained position would be abandoned. . . . But we need not have feared. The Bishop and his two chosen coadjutors came among us quietly, and strengthened every organisation which required it, fostering every real effort which was being honestly initiated."

As was the case in each parish to which Sir Lovelace Stamer came in the course of his long ministry, the parochial schools claimed his earliest attention. At St. Chad's things were in a bad way. The schools had been in debt for some time, and Mr. Carpenter, the late Vicar, had gone so far as to write to General Herbert, Chairman of the Shrewsbury School Board, to say that they could not be carried on, and must be handed over to that body. When matters were at a very low ebb a proposal had been received from the Kilburn Sisters to provide the funds for a period of five years, the teaching to be in the hands of the clergy. Mr. Heighway, a leading parishioner of St. Chad's, to whom the Kilburn Sisters were referred, sent them to Mr. Maynard How, a leading Churchman of

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Shrewsbury, who, in his turn, sent them to the Bishop of Lichfield (Dr. Maclagan). The Bishop did not altogether approve of the suggestion that the Kilburn Sisters should control the schools, and called a meeting in St. Chad's Parish, at which he told the parishioners that, though their schools were £200 or £300 in debt, yet he had known other schools in worse case, and he begged them to make an effort. It was not so very long after this that the Bishop of Shrewsbury came upon the scene. It has been said that one of the matters that influenced him to accept St. Chad's was the possibility that the Church Schools would be given up to the Board. But, however this may have been, with his usual prompt action he upset any such idea. In the words of Mr. Cross, who has already been quoted, "Another meeting was called, at which the Bishop of the diocese (Dr. Legge) presided. Here, as might be expected, a renewal of effort was decided upon, and the schools were saved. It is owing to this step being taken that St. Chad's Parish Schools occupy to-day the position of non-provided schools under Mr. Balfour's Education Act of 1902."

The Bishop of Shrewsbury's interest in the younger members of his flock did not end here. Just as at Stoke, so at Shrewsbury, he was unremitting in his efforts to influence for good the

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young men and lads after their schooldays were over.

“He found at St. Chad’s three devoted lady helpers in the parish, struggling after hours in the schoolroom with a Boys’ Club. The scheme was well meant, and had resulted in the gathering together of some very good boys who had recently left school, mixed with some boys who were otherwise, with the result that pandemonium prevailed. To mend or end this Institution was absolutely necessary, and the Bishop chose the former. He hired a room previously used as a chapel, and got together a band of young men who, in co-operation with the former managers, evolved order and pleasant recreation out of the chaos. So well did this succeed that in a comparatively short time a new club-house became necessary, and premises were obtained which provided accommodation for boys during the early hours of the evening, and also formed a pleasant and helpful place in which young men might spend the winter evenings. This Institution, opened by the then Mayor of the Borough, who was also a churchwarden of St. Chad’s, was the object of the Bishop’s careful supervision during the whole of his stay in Shrewsbury.”

It was a great matter for the parish of St. Chad’s

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to have as Vicar, though for so short a time as three and a half years, a man with the vast experience of parochial organisation and the great gift of dealing with his fellow-men, which the Bishop brought with him from Stoke. In these respects he made an immediate and lasting impression upon the place, which has been well described in the following words :—

“ Few will forget the admirable system which he (aided of course by Lady Stamer) initiated and established. Although as Suffragan Bishop he had frequently to delegate his parochial duties to his capable subordinates, yet the all-pervading spirit of himself was continually presiding over all our affairs, while his good-fellowship and downright practical fatherhood endeared him to every parishioner, to whatever class he belonged. More than once his fatherly advice exorcised a family feud, and prevented an open rupture. Severe with sin, he encouraged the sinner to escape its toils and consequences. . . . He secured that everyone who was employed in the work of the parish, in however humble a capacity, became a member of his intelligence department, and as a result there was no case of sorrow, joy, or need in the parish which was unreported, and consequently failed to receive the attention which he and his coadjutors were

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always ready to give. At all the principal functions he was present, encouraging and strengthening well-applied effort, and smoothing difficulties which presented insurmountable obstacles to less experienced minds than his own."

CHAPTER XVIII

SHREWSBURY CONTINUED

IF it was remarkable how much new life and organisation the Bishop of Shrewsbury managed to introduce in the parish of St. Chad's in the short period during which he was Vicar, it is none the less remarkable how keenly he threw himself into all kinds of work for the good of the town generally, and how deeply interested he became in all matters for the social betterment of his fellow-men, whether such things related to education, to hospital work, to the housing of the poor, or to the conduct of affairs by the Town Council.

An excellent example of the wide-minded sympathy that he felt in all kinds of *bona fide* educational work is found in the impression that he produced on the teachers and girls of the Shrewsbury High School. This school belongs to the Girls' Public Day School Trust, and Church teaching is not, therefore, given unless expressly desired. For this reason the school has not always been looked upon with any special cordiality by some of the clergy.

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Bishop Stamer's attitude was very different. What that attitude was, and what impression his personality made, are well described by Miss Gavin, a former head mistress of the School, in a paper she has kindly written for the purposes of this Memoir. Miss Gavin writes : " The Bishop, as I knew him, was a man overflowing with the milk of human kindness, and yet severe where his judgment told him he did well to be so ; slow at arriving at a decision, but unswerving once his mind was made up ; courteous, upright, sincere, a man who commanded respect. Even where one differed from him one had to confess that his position was always consistent. ' Genuine ' seems to me to be the adjective that marked him best, but it was the spiritual force that underlay all his qualities that made them tell. It is with warm gratitude that I remember Bishop Stamer's attitude. ' I won't quarrel with what we have because I can't have more,' was a speech of his that I remember : also, ' Don't talk of undenominational schools if you mean Christian,' was another. He came to call almost as soon as I arrived, for the school was in the parish of St. Chad's, and in a very short time I knew what a faithful and kind friend we had in our Bishop-Vicar. . . .

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“The last time I saw him (at Ambleside, on Whit Monday, 1905) we spoke of the Education Bill of the day. . . .

“He had become afraid that the continued controversy might lead to secular education as a solution, and spoke more strongly than I had heard before of the great importance of keeping the Bible in the Schools. When I spoke of a letter of an earnest Churchman that advocated the secular solution as more satisfactory than compromise, he said (as if deeply troubled), ‘I can’t understand it; I can’t understand it: I don’t know what he meant—but I know he is a good man.’

“When we were told in the early summer of 1895 that the Bishop was leaving St. Chad’s, I felt the blow a severe one to the High School, and to myself. When I said something of the kind to the Bishop, he said that though he ceased to be Vicar he was still Bishop, and it was his intention to visit the school if possible once a term. I remained at Shrewsbury five years longer, and during that time the Bishop only failed once to pay the terminal visit. How closely he respected his promise is shown by the fact that he wrote a note of regret at the end of the term in which he had failed to come.

“As I look back there are one or two further conversations that stand out in my memory and

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that led to remarks from him that have remained with me. Once we had occasion to speak of the wrong-doing of others, and I ventured to say that I thought he did not make enough allowance for the difficulties of the position. His answer was, 'Aren't you forgetting that with God's help difficulties can be conquered?' In 1907 new buildings were erected for the High School, and the Bishop took the greatest interest in all the preliminary steps. I showed him the list of requirements I meant to give to the architect, and he was much amused by the details, and also by the subsequent adjustment between what he called my 'flights of imagination' and the financially possible. I met him once in the street, and told him we had now reached the irreducible minimum, on which he said, 'I do like to see you dauntless young people learning your lessons of life!''

A glance at the St. Chad's Parish Magazines for the years during which the Bishop was Vicar shows another way in which he manifested his interest in the young. His eldest daughter, Miss Stamer, had already for some years been working the Girls' Friendly Society in Stoke, and in 1894 she became Secretary to the Shrewsbury Branch. Both at Stoke and at Shrewsbury the Bishop took the warmest personal interest in this work. In the

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former town a branch was started in 1879 entirely at his initiation, and was developed under his guidance. For some years he himself presided at the Associates' Quarterly Meetings, and came as often as he could to close the weekly meetings of the members with prayer and a few words of fatherly counsel. Whatever success attended the Society's work in both these towns was due in a great measure to Bishop Stamer's high ideal of its aims, and to the care he took to bring this idea home to the associates and members. His dealings with this work were entirely characteristic. He found time to give it *personal* supervision in spite of what many people would have called the more important duties which thronged his life. It was only by method and the proper use of every moment of time that nothing, small or great, ever suffered at his hands. Closely connected with this gift of utilising time to the greatest advantage was Bishop Stamer's grasp of business matters. Just as in the old days this quality had proved of such service in the Miners' Relief Association and other public matters to which he had devoted himself, so in lesser affairs it stood him in good stead in Shrewsbury.

It was impossible for him to stand quietly by and watch a work being carried on in haphazard, unbusinesslike fashion. There was a sort of Peni-

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tentiary work going on in Shrewsbury, of which he became Chairman. It had been started by Mrs. Wightman, wife of Prebendary Wightman, and was being carried on by a committee of ladies who worked it with much devotion, but were unable to keep it on a sound financial basis. When the Bishop found that this was the case, and that the accounts were always in arrear, he persuaded the Committee to close the Penitentiary sooner than carry it on in what appeared to him an unsatisfactory manner. Again, there was the matter of the St. Chad's charities, upon which it is impossible to do better than once more to quote Mr. Cross, who says : " Perhaps the greatest work which the Bishop of Shrewsbury undertook and carried through successfully was the reorganisation of St. Chad's Charities, in the distribution of which there had been much overlapping, and perhaps considerable abuse. On his initiative an inquiry was held by a Commissioner, which resulted in a new scheme whereby a representative Board of Trustees was secured. This body now distributes to the best advantage the considerable funds into more useful channels, the chief of which is the provision of pensions to the aged and poor denizens of the parish. It was a bold step, which could not have been so well undertaken by any other man. He carried it

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through without the least friction." It may be added that the scheme was practically the Bishop's own, and that, when the Shrewsbury Town Charities were subsequently reorganised, the lines of his scheme were followed,—an undoubted tribute to his business capacity.

One of the memories of Sir Lovelace Stamer that will live long in Shrewsbury is of the manner in which he performed the duties of Chaplain to the Corporation of that town. It was a most congenial office, and one to which he had already been accustomed at Stoke. As has already frequently been pointed out, all social questions interested him deeply. No better example of this can be found than the fact that when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain first mooted the idea of old-age pensions, Sir Lovelace made a special journey to Birmingham to interview that statesman upon the subject. No one followed the municipal debates in the Shrewsbury Council Chamber with greater keenness than he; and certainly no one was ever a more plain-spoken critic whenever the opportunity presented itself, especially on the occasion of his annual sermon to the Mayor and Corporation. These sermons were full of vigour, and have been described as "strong and straight." They were also of considerable length. It is said that after he

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had resigned the Chaplaincy, the Bishop on some occasion was attending a municipal banquet. An ex-Mayor rose to propose the health of the Bishops and Clergy, and after saying, "I am sure we all most heartily welcome the Bishop of Shrewsbury, especially when we remember the sermons he used to preach," added in an audible aside, "Was it for forty or only thirty minutes he used to address us? I forget which!"

But something further must be said about these sermons, for it was on these, and similar special occasions, that he chiefly excelled as a preacher. A former colleague of the Bishop, writing on this subject, says: "As a preacher, Sir Lovelace was most effective in his special addresses. He had a happy knack of selecting his texts, as for instance when preaching at the opening of a Mission Church at Joiners' Square, Hanley, which had been built at the expense of Mr. George Meakin, he spoke to the congregation on the words, 'He loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue.' Or, again, when preaching one of those memorable sermons to the Mayor and Corporation of Stoke, at a time when there was considerable talk as to the advantages supposed to be taken in trade by some of the Corporation, he chose for his text, 'He that ruleth men must be just, ruling in the fear of God,' and

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concluded his sermon with the words, ‘ And when the time of your office, Mr. Mayor and Gentlemen, shall be over, may you be able to ask with equal confidence to that of Samuel of old, “ Whose ox have I taken, or whose ass have I taken, or whom have I defrauded ? Whom have I oppressed ? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith ? ” And may the people be able to say with equal truth of you, as they replied to the prophet, “ Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man’s hand.” ’ I can remember now the thrill that seemed to go through us all, as, in the proverbial silence in which you can hear a pin drop, the Bishop gave utterance to that concluding sentence.”

The text of this sermon just mentioned was evidently a favourite one with the Bishop, for it was from the same words that in November, 1892, he addressed his strong and straight remarks to the Mayor and Corporation of Shrewsbury on the subject of the state of some of the slums of the town. After some serious remarks on the evils of bribery and corruption, he turned to the main purpose of his sermon. “ It was,” he said, “ a very solemn responsibility that rested on all of those to whom the government of this or any other town was committed. To them had been committed

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powers which without fear or favour they must exercise. They might promote the sanitary, social and moral well-being of their citizens. They lived in a day in which attention had been directed to the dwellings of the poor both in town and country. . . .

“What of Shrewsbury itself? Behind those old-world residences and picturesque streets which so charmed the eyes of visitors to Shrewsbury, were there no courts and streets in which might be found dwellings in which the conditions of human life must be such as were prejudicial to morality and favourable to the growth of vice?”

The sermon concluded with earnest words, urging his hearers to remember that the cause of humanity was the cause of God, and that “If any man say that he love God and hateth his brother the truth is not in him.” So did the Bishop sow the seed, but not on very favourable ground. It was clear to most of his hearers that there always had been slums, and that therefore there always must be : besides, had not other towns got some bad quarters too? So it was a long time before anything came of the Bishop’s words. At last, however, in February, 1906, they bore a little—a very little—fruit. It must have been an immense pleasure to Bishop Stamer to receive a letter from a Shrewsbury friend of which the following is an extract :—

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“ You have no doubt been surprised and pleased to see that the Shrewsbury Corporation have at last made a beginning to remedy the evils which beset the poor in their dwellings. What I particularly wish you to know, now that you are not so strong as you once were, is that the words you spoke faithfully and courageously on Mayor’s Sundays have been remembered, and borne fruit. . . .

“ I, a short time ago, was put on the Sanitary Committee, before whom came the question of unsanitary dwellings, and in the discussion I plainly referred to the statements you had made when Mayors had attended St. Chad’s, and pressed on the Committee the need of doing their duty, remembering you had ample means of knowledge, and undoubtedly were correct as to the state of things. After that a resolution was passed, I am pleased to say unanimously, instructing the officials to bring every case of bad dwellings to the notice of the Committee to be dealt with according to law.”

This does not perhaps amount to very much, and possibly no great results have ensued, still, it was something, and the Bishop in his reply to the above letter expressed his pleasure and said that it was encouraging to the clergy to learn that sometimes their words did not fall to the ground, and that even after many days they bore some fruit.

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Two other public bodies claimed the Bishop as a member during his residence in Shrewsbury. The first of these needs nothing more than a passing mention. He belonged for a short time to the School Board. It does not seem clear why his membership was of so short duration, but it is possible that after having been for so long Chairman of the School Board at Stoke he did not find sufficient scope for his energies in this direction at Shrewsbury. He had a great many calls on his time, and his eminently practical mind would no doubt prompt him to lay aside a position in which he did not find it possible to be of real service.

The other body to which he belonged was the Board of Management of the Salop Infirmary, to which he was appointed on June 22nd, 1901, after he had been for some years Rector of Edgmond. His long experience in a similar capacity as a Director of the Staffordshire Infirmary, together with his well-known business capacity, enabled him to render valuable assistance in the matter of Hospital finance, and it was owing to his initiative that many subscriptions were increased in value.

But he will be chiefly remembered for the action he took with regard to what is called "the Infirmary Service," i.e. a service held in one of the town

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churches on a date as near as possible to that of the November Hunt Ball, at which service a collection was made for the funds of the Infirmary. Now a very strange and unseemly custom had obtained with regard to this service. A bride and a debutante selected by the Treasurer for the year (who is one of the county gentlemen of Shropshire) have always stood at the end of the church to collect the gifts of the congregation. It must have been a curious scene in the days when these ladies were arrayed in full evening dress. It is said that the Vicar of St. Chad's, where this service was for many years held, used in those "good old times" to walk down first at the end of the service and give cheery greetings to his friends in the pews as he passed, such as, "See you at the ball to-night," and so on. Then he would proceed to put something on each of the two plates, that neither lady might feel jealous, and so go on his way to make room for the congregation, who with much jocularly filed past the ladies, giving their money to whichever pleased them best. The collection was then taken to the vestry and counted, and handed over to the Treasurer of the Infirmary.

This ceremony, shorn of its accompaniment of evening dress and of much else that in old days was out of harmony with its surroundings,

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was held at St. Chad's until the incumbency of Mr. Carpenter, when, in conjunction with Bishop Maclagan of Lichfield and Archdeacon Lloyd, the Vicar made an effort to get the collection conducted with more decency, and especially to get the alms properly presented to God.

Some two years before he came to be Vicar of St. Chad's the Bishop of Shrewsbury received a letter from the late Lord Rowton, the Treasurer of the year, asking him to preach at the Infirmary Service, which would be held at St. Julian's Church, to which it had been removed in consequence of the objection of the then Vicar of St. Chad's. The Bishop's answer to this letter gives an excellent insight into the state of affairs :—

*“ Cliff Ville, Stoke-on-Trent,
25th Oct., 1890.*

Dear Lord Rowton,

There is only one impediment to my consenting, very willingly, to your request that I should be the preacher at St. Julian's on the occasion of the Anniversary on behalf of the Salop Infirmary, on Nov. 13th, and it lies in the manner of making the collection. I am certainly at one with the Bishop of Lichfield and the Vicar of St. Chad's in the objection which they have taken to it, and, heartily

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as I desire to help the infirmity, and to accept the invitation given in such kind terms by your Lordship, I am precluded from doing so under existing conditions.

Permit me to ask wherein is the use of requiring a sermon to be preached, in which an appeal must be based on a recognition of the love of God, and a tender regard for His suffering poor, when the offerings which will presently be made will be a homage to the popularity of the Bride and the Debutante who stand at the door to receive them? Pardon my boldness in saying that your Lordship's Treasurership would be welcomed by a large number of the most faithful and generous people in the town and county of Salop if you resolved to dispense with the custom, and ruled that the collection should be made by gentlemen whom you selected, and reverently brought to the Holy Table to be presented to God. I cannot believe that the change would cause any loss to the Infirmary. Yet, if it did for this year, I cannot doubt that it would be more than made up in the future when the change became known, and in any case the money given without any taint of mere worldly motive would be better worth having. I trust your Lordship to bear with my freedom. I have stated the condition on which alone I can be the preacher.

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If you tell me that it can be conceded, I will do my utmost to justify the change."

Lord Rowton's reply stated that so far as he was concerned he was "entirely committed to the old and established method," and therefore regretted that they could not hope to see the Bishop in the pulpit of St. Julian's on November 13th.

So it was that nothing came of the Bishop of Shrewsbury's protest, and the Infirmary Service remained for the next two years at St. Julian's. When, however, Sir Lovelace Stamer came to live in Shrewsbury as Vicar of St. Chad's he again took the matter in hand. Feeling ran so high among a section of old-fashioned subscribers to the Infirmary in favour of what always had been, and therefore was, in their opinion, the best possible state of things, that the Bishop found that his one hope was to obtain some kind of compromise. He entered into correspondence with the late Vicar of St. Chad's, with Bishop Legge, with Archbishop Maclagan, and with Lord Bradford, the Lord-Lieutenant of the county. The last-named was exceedingly anxious that the service should be held at St. Mary's Church, which immediately adjoins the Infirmary, and he was further in favour of the Bishop of Shrewsbury's suggestion that the congregation should remain

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in church while the collection was taken by the ladies attended by two gentlemen to the chancel, and then reverently presented to God. In November, 1893, this plan was pursued, and the service held for the first and last time at St. Mary's. By the time the next anniversary came round in 1894, the Bishop, by his personal influence, managed to get the service restored to St. Chad's, where, in a somewhat more reverent vein than of old, it is likely to remain.

CHAPTER XIX

EDGMOND

IN the early spring of 1896 Archdeacon Lloyd, Rector of Edgmond, died. What the result of this event was to the Bishop of Shrewsbury shall be told in his own words, extracted from a letter in the St. Chad's Parish Magazine of April of that year.

“I would have wished that I might have been the first to tell you myself in my monthly letter of my call to succeed Archdeacon Lloyd as Rector of Edgmond, and of the consequent termination of my happy connection with St. Chad's. But the news was bound to get abroad, and all I can do is to confirm it, and to assure you that I make the move with reluctance and regret. I wished for no better position than that which for the last three years and a half I have held as your Vicar. You gave me and mine a hearty welcome when we arrived; and your continued kindness and support have made

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our life and my ministry in St. Chad's bright and happy. Though I have sometimes felt the duties of the Parish Priest press heavily when added to those of Bishop Suffragan, and was conscious that both suffered through the combination, yet I looked to be pardoned by you for shortcomings in what I had not undertaken of my own choice, while I sincerely believed that the Parish was at no real disadvantage, seeing that it had the whole time and attention of two earnest and hard-working Assistant Clergy. And so I could have been content to go on to the end, never thinking of, or desiring a change ; but the death of Archdeacon Lloyd has really forced it upon me. You may know, or, if not, you ought to know, that the Patron of Edgmond, Prebendary Corbet, has placed the right of Presentation to Edgmond in the hands of Trustees to be offered by them to the Bishop of Lichfield, as often as a vacancy occurs, that he may nominate to it his Suffragan or Assistant Bishop. But if within three months he fails to make such appointment, then it reverts to the Trustees to appoint whom they please. This has been done accordingly on this, the first vacancy that has occurred since the creation of the Trust, and the Bishop of Lichfield has made no delay in signifying to me his wish that I should accept the provision which has been made for his Suffragan. The

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objections to my doing so were obvious. I am too old to make another move, and to enter upon the charge of a new Parish. I have been for the greater part of my ministerial life essentially a town clergyman, and country life and its ways will be altogether new to me. By relinquishing St. Chad's I am unsettling the Parish after a shorter tenure of office than my predecessor. On the other hand, the Bishop cannot be expected to miss the opportunity offered him of filling Edgmond with his Suffragan. Were he to forgo it, the Trustees would appoint someone who might hold it for many years, and for so long the provision of a maintenance for a Bishop Suffragan would be inoperative. Therefore the choice lay between laying down my Episcopal duties or making the move. After well weighing the alternative, I concluded that the latter was what I *ought* to do, though not what I liked to do. Moreover, I felt it due to regard the wishes of the generous Patron, who, in the interests of the Diocese, has surrendered his own rights. And his desire was to see me planted at Edgmond."

So clear is this statement in its characteristic desire that his parishioners should know exactly what he was about to do, and why he was about to do it, that it seems unnecessary to add anything to the Bishop's own words. At the same time there

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has been so much uncertainty in the minds of many who are interested in the affairs of the Church in that part of the country as to what was really intended by the Patron's surrender of the living of Edgmond, that it may be as well to try to make this perfectly clear, even at the risk of repetition. With this object in view nothing better can be done than to quote some extracts from the Deed of Conveyance of the Advowson of Edgmond to the Archdeacon of Salop and others, which was dated March 11th, 1893. The following appear to be the essential words :—

“Upon trust, whensoever and so often as the right of presentation to the said Rectory and parish Church of Edgmond shall fall vacant that the trustees or trustee for the time being hereof shall permit the Bishop of Lichfield for the time being (if he think fit, but not otherwise) to nominate for presentation to the said Rectory and parish Church any person who at the time of such nomination shall hold a commission from the said Bishop of Lichfield as an Assistant or Suffragan Bishop of or for the said diocese of Lichfield or any part thereof.

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“And it is hereby further declared that if at any time hereafter a new diocesan Bishoprick shall be constituted, including within its boundaries the said

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parish of Edgmond or any parts thereof, the trustees may in their discretion assent to the said advowson and the revenues of the said rectory or any part thereof being applied or used towards or for the endowment of such new Bishoprick in such manner and upon such terms as the trustees may think fit, and as may be authorised by law."

All this is important as further reference to the subject will occur when the Bishop's resignation of the living of Edgmond is described.

There was something singularly suitable in the choice of a pretty country village as the final scene of Sir Lovelace Stamer's parochial labours. They began more than forty years before in the charming country parish of Turvey, they ended in the no less beautiful Shropshire village, which crowns a hill above the little market town of Newport. The comfortable old-world Rectory within a few yards of the church was an ideal home for the declining years of one who had spent the best years of his life in the busy streets of a great town.

But it must not be thought that the Bishop consented as yet to a life of even comparative inactivity. He was still busily engaged hither and thither about the Diocese of Lichfield in the performance of his duties as Suffragan Bishop. These alone might well have been thought sufficient

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for the time and work of a man of his age. But he was Rector of Edgmond, and was never the man to shirk what he considered the responsibilities of any position he held. It is interesting and remarkable to find that here, in the peaceful surroundings of a little village, he found opportunities of carrying on exactly the same kinds of work for his fellow-men that had been his chief sources of interest in his former spheres. Education, both elementary and secondary, the houses and sanitation of his poorer neighbours, a Home for girls, an Institute for working men and lads—in all these matters he is found busying himself before he had been long at Edgmond.

The village schools claimed his attention first. The buildings that he found in use had been a barn, and were uncomfortable and unsuited for school purposes. His predecessor, Archdeacon Lloyd, had pledged the place to the Education Department for the erection of new schools, but it was left to the Bishop to fulfil the promise. He set to work at once on a scheme for entirely new premises. The inhabitants of rural districts are proverbially hard to move to new undertakings. But the Bishop was irresistible. It was obvious that the new buildings would cost over £1000, and he set an example of generosity by

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giving £200. As a matter of fact the entire cost came to over £1100, and, in addition to his first subscription, he made up a deficit of £211. It will thus be seen that well over one-third of the whole amount came out of the Bishop's own pocket. The speed with which he not only gained his point as to the necessity of new schools, but also hurried on the work, is evident from the fact that the buildings were finished in the September of the year following that of his arrival at Edgmond.

Situated quite close to both church and Rectory the schools were his great delight. When not away on episcopal work he invariably gave religious teaching in the morning, and as often as not was present to close the school with prayer in the afternoon. He knew all about every child, and the children knew that he loved them, and returned his affection, though there was a certain mixture of awe in their feeling for him, for he could be very severe when any misbehaviour was brought to his notice. Mr. Pitchford, who is still master of the Edgmond Schools, was greatly impressed by the Bishop's unbounded interest. "I never knew," says Mr. Pitchford, "anyone so keen on schools. He knew the moment he came in whether everything was in order and going on properly. It was the same

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with other things. He always wanted his Parish to be up-to-date and on the go."

But while already immersed in the affairs of his new parish, a great public event claimed his attention. In the course of the Bishop's first year at Edgmond he was once more called upon to undertake the heavy work of Secretary to a Church Congress, the occasion being the meeting of that body at Shrewsbury in the autumn of 1896. Remembering that he was not far short of seventy years of age, and that it had been already proved that his many arduous labours at Stoke-upon-Trent had weakened his constitution, it is astonishing to find him facing the work of organising and "running" the Congress with all the vigour and enthusiasm of a young man. Those who were associated with him as members of one or other of the committees will bear witness that he was never quite happy unless the bulk of the work and responsibility rested on his own shoulders. He was still "a one-horse shay."

So much was said in a previous chapter as to the Church Congress that was held at Stoke-upon-Trent that it is unnecessary to do more in this place than to say that the Shrewsbury Congress was, if anything, even more successful than that at Stoke. As one correspondent said in a letter to the

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Bishop : " There seemed to be not one important hitch. The Archbishop's sermon to begin with, and our Bishop's (Lichfield) closing of the Eucharist discussion to end with, seemed to me most admirable."

Canon Lonsdale, writing from his home at Lichfield, where he had been obliged to remain, his great age preventing his attendance at the Congress, said : " I want to add my congratulations to the many of that kind which you must have received, at the signal success of which I hear on all hands, of the Shrewsbury Congress, of which you were the originator, and unless I am misinformed the moving spirit from first to last. . . . I am only sorry I was not there to witness your triumph."

The only part as a speaker that the Bishop of Shrewsbury took in the proceedings of the Congress was to read a paper written by his friend Bishop John Selwyn, who was prevented by illness from being present, and to return thanks at the conclusion of the Congress for a vote of thanks to the Secretaries, which was moved by Dr. Thornton, Bishop of Ballarat. In the course of the latter's speech he amusingly remarked, " As for the Bishop of Shrewsbury, in putting our vote of thanks to him the President might well say, ' Any one of the

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contrary opinion will be escorted to the County Lunatic Asylum.' ”

Sir Lovelace Stamer's reply was most happy. He said that when they looked at the close of the Congress they had undoubted reason to believe that it was not human or individual effort, but God Himself Who had prospered their work. He believed that there was no fairer town in that part of England, and that never had a Congress Hall been placed in fairer surroundings. Certainly it says something for the genius of the Bishop of Shrewsbury that he made a notable success of two Church Congresses in such vastly different localities as Stoke-upon-Trent and Shrewsbury.

The Congress once over, it must have been with a feeling of relief that Sir Lovelace returned to the affairs of his quiet country parish.

One of the matters in which he found that Edgmond was decidedly not up-to-date was that of a proper water supply. Many of the cottagers had to go a long way to fetch their drinking water. To remedy this the Bishop proposed to the Parish Council to construct a scheme on a large and excellent scale for supplying the whole place with water to be paid for by a rate. The scheme would in the opinion of well-qualified persons have paid well, but the outlying farmers were incredulous,

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and, seeing no benefit likely to accrue to themselves, would not listen to him, and carried their opposition to the verge of rudeness. But the Bishop was determined that somehow or other the villagers should have a convenient supply of pure drinking water, and that, if the Parish Council would not take up the matter, he would act by himself. He therefore put up a windmill to pump water, which was carried to a convenient spot in the village street, where a fountain was erected which has proved a great blessing to the cottagers. "We had to beg water where we could till he gave us the fountain," said one old dame in speaking of the Bishop; while another told how he had once carried her bucket for her. This little incident was characteristic of his great tenderness to the old, and especially to women. The old villagers will never forget him. He was quite at his best with them. As one of them well put it: "He made himself one with you. He was the same to all; he loved one and he loved all." No stronger evidence could be given of his love for the people than this splendid gift of the water supply. His friend and neighbour, Mr. Bodenham, gave him the site, and he had one or two subscriptions, but the cost to himself has been estimated at not less than £600.

Another benefit conferred upon the village of

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Edgmond by the Bishop was the gift of the cottage and garden adjoining the Institute. How this came about can be described in the Bishop's own words, prefacing them merely with the statement that he had keenly promoted, ever since his coming into the parish, concerts and entertainments of various kinds, to relieve the monotony of winter evenings and to provide a counter attraction to other less desirable places of refreshment. Here is what Sir Lovelace wrote about it in the Parish Magazine of March, 1905: "I am aware that for a long time past the desire has been growing to provide a larger and more convenient place for our entertainments, and for the purposes of a Working Men's Club and Reading Room, than is to be found in the Foresters' Hall. It was with a view to being in a position to offer a site for this that when there was a sale of property in Edgmond last autumn I became the purchaser of the cottage and garden adjoining the Foresters' Hall. . . .

"My intention was to convey the whole property to the Parish on condition that responsible persons would guarantee the erection of such a building as might be considered most suitable."

Considerable delay occurred owing to the suggestion of other schemes. One idea, which commended itself to the Bishop, was to purchase the Foresters'

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Hall and add to it, using the cottage for the residence of a caretaker. But the Bishop's health rendered it necessary that he should resign the living just at this very time. The various schemes were postponed until a new Rector should be appointed. The suggestion to purchase the Foresters' Hall was abandoned, and it was felt that it would be better to erect an Institute on the site adjoining the cottage. Ultimately, Sir Lovelace conveyed the cottage and land to the Diocesan Trust, to be used for the purposes of the Institute if that building should be completed within two years.

It will be remembered how keenly the Bishop of Shrewsbury had worked on behalf of the Home for Women and Girls at Stafford, and it must have been a great pleasure to him when in 1898 Miss Roddam, a neighbour and close friend of the Stammers when at Edgmond, moved her Home for Friendless Girls from Newport to a specially erected building in Edgmond. It was dedicated by the Bishop of Shrewsbury, and he took a warm interest in its welfare.

As has been already said, it was remarkable how in so many ways Sir Lovelace Stamer was able to continue on a smaller scale the interests of his former years. At Stoke he started night schools, and at Edgmond he was a strong supporter of this

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endeavour to carry on the education begun at the Elementary Schools, and he was probably struck by the difference between the scholars in the two places. At Stoke too, as well as at Shrewsbury, he was thoroughly alive to the importance of the work of what have come to be called Secondary Schools, and when he came to Edgmond he soon found considerable scope for his activities in promoting the welfare of the Grammar School at Newport. The head master, Mr. J. W. Shuker, has given an account of the Bishop's work in connection with the School in the following words :—

“ On July 29th, 1896 [i.e. very shortly after his arrival at Edgmond], the Bishop of Shrewsbury, having been appointed a Manager of Newport (Salop) Grammar School by the Court of the Haberdashers' Company, signed the declaration and took his seat on the Board. On April 1st, 1897, he was appointed Chairman of the Body of Managers, and he occupied this position, being re-elected each year, until he resigned his position on the Board on December 21st, 1905—a step rendered necessary by his removal to a residence more than ten miles distant from the School.

“ For some years before he became a Manager it had been recognised that the School premises, which were practically the same as when the School

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was founded in 1656, were quite inadequate to the needs of modern education, and efforts were made to obtain the sanction of the Charity Commissioners to the erection of new buildings on a site just outside the town. For various reasons this sanction was refused, and the Bishop was the chief mover in formulating proposals for the alteration of the existing premises, with a view to making them more in accordance with modern requirements. Though he encountered serious opposition, he finally carried his point with the Body of Managers, with the Haberdashers' Company, who were the School Governors, and with the Charity Commissioners. The result was that in 1899 he obtained sanction for the expenditure of a sum of £2,000, subsequently increased to £3,500, for the alteration of the School buildings.

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“In 1900 he was appointed by the Managers a Representative Governor of the Careswell Charity, which had the management of estates, the income of which provides seventeen scholarships to the Universities, of which four are allocated to boys educated at Newport.

“In 1903 Mr. T. Collins, who had been Headmaster since 1871, resigned, and was succeeded by

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Mr. J. W. Shuker. At this time there were just over fifty boys in the School, and the Bishop, though by no means inclined to judge the efficiency of a School by numbers alone, was keenly alive to the fact that there should have been more boys in attendance. At this time Greek was an 'extra,' and a suggestion had been made by an Inspector, who had been sent down by the Cambridge University Syndicate to report on the work of the school at the invitation of the Managers, that Latin should be an optional subject also. To this the Bishop was strenuously opposed, for, though he fully realised the importance of a more up-to-date curriculum, he approved strongly of a Classical Education, and was resolved that Latin should not suffer as Greek had done. This illustrates the Bishop's views on education. He welcomed the development that had taken place in the direction of science and modern languages, but he at the same time wished to retain all that was best of the old system.

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"He approved of the admission to the School of Elementary School boys who had gained scholarships, as affording the advantage of secondary education to those likely to benefit by it ; though he probably would not have approved of the indis-

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criminate admission of 'Free Placers' to the extent of 25 per cent according to present Regulations.

"It was a source of great satisfaction to him when the numbers in the School began to rise, so that on his resignation there were nearly 100 boys in the School. Still greater was his delight at the greatly improved results in the Cambridge Local Examinations.

"He visited the School each spring to address the boys and present prizes which he himself gave to those who did best in the Local Examinations. This he continued to do after his official connection with the School ceased, coming from Penkridge in 1906, 1907, and 1908 to present his prizes, and speaking to the boys on each occasion in simple language on such subjects as Duty, and the importance of their becoming God-fearing men and good citizens. . . .

"He was essentially a 'strong' man, with decided and well-defined views on educational matters."

The above account bears witness to the fact that the Bishop of Shrewsbury was to the end vigorous and determined in carrying out whatever seemed to him to be right. Most of the work that has been described as occupying his attention as Rector of Edgmond has been in connection with large matters

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of policy, but if the inhabitants of the village were questioned they would be found to bear witness to the lasting impression he left on the place by his faithful pastoral visiting. As has been the case with so many Bishops, he found that in personal contact with the sick and needy around him he gained for himself spiritual help to meet the strain of wider duties which might otherwise tend to become dry and formal. There is a little story still told in Edgmond of how a labouring man and his wife left the village for another part of Shropshire where the former was run over and killed not long afterwards, and how the Bishop, hearing of it, wrote to the widow and sent her a book in proof of his remembrance and sympathy. It was just an example of the sort of personal thoughtfulness which endeared him to so many people of all conditions. He never forgot the humblest friend, and he delighted to assure them of this by sending out hundreds of Christmas cards, often with special local views and words chosen by himself. Even in his most serious illnesses he never forgot this custom, and would remind his family of the names of those to whom he wished his remembrances despatched.

Two things must be borne in mind when speaking of the nine and a half years of Sir Lovelace Stamer's

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residence at Edgmond. One is that he was busily engaged during these years in the many episcopal duties that fell to his lot as Bishop Suffragan. Confirmations, special sermons, opening of churches and mission rooms, committees, and consultations innumerable—all these and such-like matters had the first claim. It is well to remember this, that the amount of work he accomplished for Edgmond and its neighbourhood may be properly appreciated. Secondly, it has to be remembered that from the year 1902 onwards the Bishop's health was greatly broken down. Too much cannot be said for the pluck with which, during the years that immediately followed, he fought against much physical distress and weakness, unwilling to lay down his arms so long as he could anyhow bear them in the service of his master.

It was in July, 1902, that the Bishop was taken ill rather suddenly with what has been described as "a bad turn." At the end of September he went to Hunsingore (Canon Dent's) with Lady Stamer for a change. There one of his knees troubled him greatly, being badly swollen, and in a week's time he returned home to lie up. This proved to be the beginning of a serious illness, lasting all that autumn. There was congestion at the base of both lungs, and a nurse had to be obtained. It was not till

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Christmas that there was any real steady improvement, and it was late in the following March that he was strong enough to take his first Confirmation after his illness.

In November, 1904, he was taken ill again, this time with a severe cough. All his engagements had to be cancelled early in December, and on the 9th of that month he was so ill that he fell in his study. Throughout December and January he was very dangerously ill, but he rallied at the end of the latter month, and was able to go to Bournemouth with Lady Stamer on February 7th, for a little change. But his strength did not thoroughly return, and he felt so broken that on May 23rd he wrote to the Bishop of Lichfield, resigning his Suffraganship and the Rectory of Edgmond, feeling that he ought not to stand in the way of the appointment of a younger and stronger man to both positions.

The circumstances arising from this resignation proved to be exceptionally painful to Sir Lovelace Stamer. It will be remembered that Prebendary Corbet had given the patronage of the living of Edgmond into the hands of Trustees, who were to permit the Bishop of Lichfield to appoint (if he wished) a Suffragan Bishop to the benefice. It does not seem that it ever occurred to either Prebendary Corbet or the Bishop of Shrewsbury that the Bishop

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of Lichfield might not wish to perpetuate the office of Suffragan. Yet such proved to be the case. Bishop Legge was probably actuated by a feeling of the unsatisfactory and insecure nature of the office. Also, he may have been reluctant to appoint a younger man over the head of Bishop Anson, who was acting as Assistant Bishop in the Diocese. Anyhow, he decided against appointing a new Suffragan, and his decision came as a great disappointment to Prebendary Corbet, and as that and something more to Sir Lovelace Stamer. It was a natural but a mistaken feeling on his part that the abolition of the office would be looked upon as a slur on his own work. He thought people would say that there was not to be another Suffragan because he had not been a success. As if anyone who knew the Diocese of Lichfield and Sir Lovelace Stamer could have had such an idea for a moment !

The Bishop of Lichfield first of all proposed that his Assistant Bishop, Bishop Anson, should be appointed to Edgmond, but the latter preferred to remain at Lichfield. The presentation to the living, under these circumstances, reverted to Prebendary Corbet, who presented Prebendary Talbot, the present Rector.

Considerable correspondence ensued between the Bishops of Lichfield and Shrewsbury on the subject

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of the latter's desire to renounce the title of Bishop of Shrewsbury, and his prebendal stall in Lichfield Cathedral. Bishop Legge was extremely desirous that neither step should be taken, and ultimately Sir Lovelace consented to retain the stall, though he remained fixed in his determination to end his days with no other title than that of "Bishop Stamer." It was a most unfortunate thing that such a grave misunderstanding should have occurred at a time when Sir Lovelace Stamer's health was broken, and the last years of his long and strenuous life were obviously at hand. Had he been in his old vigorous health, it is possible that he would have been able to meet the disappointment with greater complacency.

The Bishop of Shrewsbury announced his resignation to the people of Edgmond on Trinity Sunday, and in the August Parish Magazine he was able to tell them that he had found a suitable home at Penkridge, six miles south of Stafford.

On September 25th the churchwardens of Edgmond called a meeting of the parishioners, at which the Bishop was presented with an address illustrated by water-colour views of the church, rectory, schools, fountain, and the cottage attached to the Institute, thus forming a pictorial record of his chief undertakings in the place.

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So ended the parochial ministry of a great Parish Priest, just fifty-two years from his ordination in Lichfield Cathedral as a deacon. It has probably seldom fallen to the lot of any bishop to continue with such zeal and success the labours of an incumbent in addition to those imposed by his episcopal office.

CHAPTER XX

THE LAST YEARS

THE three last years of Bishop Stamer's life were passed at Halingdene, the charming house on the outskirts of the village of Penkridge which is still occupied by Lady Stamer. He was, of course, more or less of an invalid during the whole of this time, but every now and then he would gain a temporary access of strength, sufficient to enable him to visit Stoke for a Miners' Relief Committee, or to speak to the inmates of the Stafford Home. He was also able to preach occasionally in Penkridge Church.

The year 1906 opened badly for him as regards health, but by April 24th he was well enough to go to Shrewsbury and institute the new vicars of St. Chad's and St. Michael's. In the following month he spent three weeks at Ambleside, greatly enjoying several visits to his great friend Miss Arnold, at Fox How, with whom he had for years carried on a frequent correspondence.

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Throughout that year his health kept fairly good, as is evidenced by his being able in October to pay a visit to his son Reginald at Leek. It was towards the autumn of the next year (1907) that the Bishop's sight began to fail him seriously—a severe addition to his other physical disabilities.

Such is a brief review of Sir Lovelace's health until the beginning of his last illness in 1908. It is not a little remarkable to find that these last three years were full of incident. They are marked by events, some of the brightest and some of the saddest, of much interest and importance to the Bishop, and by one, the last of all, which called upon him to put forth that calm judgment and decision in affairs of policy which had always distinguished him. It may be as well to mention this matter first, as it was of a less personal nature. The six towns forming what is known as "the Potteries" had for some time been considering the question of federating themselves as one borough. There was general agreement as to the advisability of this course, but great divergence of opinion upon details, especially on such points as finance and the more sentimental question of the name by which the new borough should be called. Considerable time and money had already been expended upon an inquiry by the Local

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Government Board, and before a Committee of the House of Commons. It now appeared likely that there might be a protracted and costly squabble over details before a Committee of the House of Lords. At this juncture the whole district was profoundly impressed by the appearance in the local press of a letter from Bishop Stamer—a letter as far-seeing and as able as any that he ever wrote. In it he urged upon the six towns that for the sake of peace and to save delay and expense they should hold a conference, over which Lord Dartmouth should be invited to preside, and settle amongst themselves the terms upon which the desired federation should be arranged. This letter was probably to some extent the outcome of the Bishop's last visit to Stoke, which took place on August 24th, when he had luncheon at his old house, Cliff Ville, then the property of Mr. Geen, with whom he had a long conversation. The letter appeared on September 8th, scarcely three weeks before Sir Lovelace took to his bed, from which he never rose again. The impression that it produced showed that the position he had held in the Potteries was still his, though sixteen years had passed away since he left Stoke. No better expression can be given to the feeling aroused by this letter than by quoting some words of Alderman Geen's, in a great speech

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which he delivered at a meeting of the Stoke Town Council on December 31st, 1908, when he announced that the scheme for federation propounded by Stoke would be accepted with certain modifications, and that the name of the newly federated borough would be "Stoke-upon-Trent." The special words referred to were these : " I wish to take this opportunity of saying a word or two on Bishop Stamer's letter. I felt obliged, at the time of its publication, to remain silent. Had I thought the time opportune, nothing would have prevented me from expressing in public my high appreciation of the Bishop's efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement in financial and other matters. If there ever has been a man whose advice I should unhesitatingly follow, it was Bishop Stamer. I had the infinite pleasure of his acquaintance for over forty years, and during the last thirty it was of more than ordinary character. The last occasion upon which he was out of doors he and I discussed for over an hour the question of Federation, and the difficulties which lay in the way of a solution by agreement. His letter was written, as all his letters were, with a disinterestedness and singleness of purpose which always characterised his actions."

It is not too much to say that the whole district was profoundly moved by the words of the aged

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Bishop. It was a fitting circumstance that his last public utterance should have been on behalf of what he felt to be the best interests of the town with which he was so closely identified, and which he loved so dearly.

It was early in November 1905 that the first of the more personally interesting events occurred after the Bishop's removal to Penkridge. The clergy of the Diocese of Lichfield, sensible of the fatherly guidance, the generous help, and the affectionate sympathy which they had always received from Bishop Stamer during his exercise of the office of Bishop Suffragan, determined to mark his resignation of that office by giving him some present which should be for his own personal comfort and use. A large gathering assembled at the Borough Hall, Stafford, with the Bishop of Lichfield in the chair.

The presentation was made by Archdeacon Hodgson—an old Stoke curate—and consisted of an illuminated address, and a cheque with which to purchase a brougham. This carriage proved of the greatest comfort to the Bishop during his last years, and, as he himself said, he seldom entered it without grateful thoughts of its donors.

The spring of 1907 saw a great family gathering at Halingdene on the occasion of the golden wedding

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of Bishop and Lady Stamer, who had been married on April 16th, just fifty years before, in the parish church of Hunsingore. All the Bishop's children and grandchildren were present except one, and the day was one of the greatest possible joy and thankfulness to him and Lady Stamer. A celebration of the Holy Communion was held in Penkridge Church at eleven o'clock, and afterwards there was a big family luncheon party, while in the afternoon the party was increased by the arrival of several relatives and friends, among the former being Lady Stamer's brother, Canon Dent, the Bishop's oldest and closest friend, who had performed the marriage ceremony in 1857.

Every child and grandchild was presented on the occasion with a letter printed in gold lettering on a cream ground and tied with gold thread, which was addressed to them by the Bishop and formed a touching memento of the day. The spirit of the letter may be gleaned from the heading, which consisted of the words, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

In the following July Canon Dent, who was in bad health at the time that he attended the celebration of the golden wedding at Halingdene, died, and so Bishop Stamer lost that almost lifelong friend to whom those beautiful letters were addressed

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which are given in an early chapter of this memoir. The year 1908 found Sir Lovelace with fast-failing eyesight and gradually diminishing strength. He was now unable to read, and Lady Stamer and his daughters spent much time in reading aloud to him, and writing some of his letters, though others he still managed to write himself with the aid of a strong magnifying glass. Not a few of these have been preserved by those to whom they were written as touching memorials of their old friend and Bishop. One example may be given here. It is addressed to Mr. Charles Blagg of Greenhill, near Cheadle.

*“ Halingdene, Penkridge, Staffs,
5th July, 1908.*

My dear Blagg,

My daughter has been reading to her blind father the report in the “ Staffordshire Advertizer ” of the Pan - Anglican Continuation Meeting at Hanley, over which you presided. Your reference to my dear son [Reginald], who has volunteered for service abroad, came upon me unexpectedly, but I recognise gratefully the kind feeling which prompted it, and I need not say it gave me great pleasure. I trust I may not be ungrateful to you for your generous words, or to God, Who has

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honoured me by calling a son of mine to this work for Him, by surrendering him grudgingly, although at my time of life it must be for this world a lasting separation. . . .

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You will doubt the reality of my blindness as you read this, but by the help of a magnifying glass I am still able to guide my pen. With kind regards,

Yrs. very sincerely,

L. T. STAMER, Bishop."

This letter is specially interesting for its reference to the fact that the Bishop's son, the Rev. Reginald Stamer, who had been his father's curate at St. Chad's, Shrewsbury, and afterwards at Edgmond, and who had been successively Vicar of Lydbury North, and of Leek in Staffordshire, had inherited his father's zeal for missions, and, stirred by the awakening influence of the Pan-Anglican Synod, had suddenly accepted a call to work in Canada. There is no doubt that the Bishop felt the sacrifice he was called upon to make very severely. He was conscious that he had not long to live, and he had hoped to have this dear son with him to the last. His expression in the above letter to Mr. Blagg of his sense of the honour that God was doing him is one more example of the way in which he strove

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to put his own wishes entirely in subjection to what appeared to be his Master's will.

Allusion has been made to the Bishop's failing strength in the early part of the year 1908, and it is of interest to notice that on April 29th he attended his last function of any public importance, journeying as far as Newcastle-under-Lyme to the consecration of St. Paul's Church, of which he had laid the foundation stone just three years before. It was evidently a great exertion to him to be present, and his many friends who met him there were saddened to find him so changed and feeble.

In spite, however, of ever-increasing weakness, he kept up continual communication with numberless friends, whose letters were his chief interest during the summer months that followed.

On September 27th, accompanied by Lady Stamer, he went to the little country church of Dunston, near Penkridge, where he liked to go now and then to attend a Midday Celebration when there was not one at Penkridge. This was the last time he was at church. He seemed very tired on his return, and was evidently feebler than usual in the afternoon, his cough being most severe. Next day he was distinctly worse, and the doctor, on finding some slight congestion of the lungs, advised his return to bed.

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In a week's time it was obvious that the Bishop was dangerously ill. Two excellent nurses were obtained, who by their skill and kindness did all that was possible to alleviate the distress arising from his weakness and restlessness.

On Monday, October 12th, the Bishop of Lichfield paid him a farewell visit, administering the Holy Communion to him and some of the family. For more than a fortnight after this he lingered on, now and then appearing to be sinking, and then his wonderful constitution enabling him to rally. He made frequent references to his son Reginald, asking to have messages sent to him, and he often asked to have hymns read to him. He one day asked for the one about a "grey-haired Saint," and after some search it was discovered in his copy of the Christian Year, with the following verse marked:

The grey-haired saint may fail at last,
The surest guide a wanderer prove ;
Death only binds us fast
To the bright shore of love.

These words were often repeated to him during Sunday, October 18th, which was his seventy-ninth birthday.

The end came on Thursday, October 29th, when, after a period of unconsciousness, the loud and difficult breathing suddenly calmed down, and he

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quietly drew his last breath soon after seven o'clock in the evening. Lady Stamer with two of her sons (the present Sir Lovelace Stamer and Mr. William Stamer) and her two unmarried daughters were all present.

Every one who was with the Bishop during this last illness was struck with the patience with which he bore his great bodily distress. One of his nurses, writing afterwards, used these words : " I cannot express how deeply I was impressed by my entire intercourse with the Bishop during his illness. The thoughts left in my mind are too deep for words." So it was that this faithful servant unconsciously carried on his Lord's work to the very end.

On the evening of All Saints' Day the coffin was brought downstairs, and, as it rested for a few minutes in the hall surrounded by the family, the Vicar of Penkridge said some prayers. Immediately afterwards the hearse started upon its long journey by road to Stoke-upon-Trent, where it had been most fitly decided that the mortal remains of the Bishop should rest. Two of the Bishop's sons followed as far as the bridge on the road to Stafford, his eldest son having gone on to Stoke by train to be in readiness to receive the body there.

Passing through Stafford the route lay by Walton, Tittensor, and Trentham, and so into the town of

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Stoke, where crowds of waiting mourners bared their heads as the hearse took its way to the Parish Church. Here it was met by a body of leading Church laymen, Messrs. Geen, Harding, Hatch, Peake, Williams, and Woolliscroft, who placed the coffin upon a bier and wheeled it into the chancel, the Rector of Stoke reading the opening sentences of the Burial Service. A purple pall was then placed over the coffin together with the floral cross which had been laid there at Halingdene, and two or three wreaths of beautiful flowers, and three large lighted candles were set on either side. Then the doors of the church were thrown open, and his old Stoke people streamed in, many of them in tears, all of them sad at heart, in apparently unending numbers to look upon the coffin of him whom they loved, and who had loved them, and had been the best friend Stoke had ever known. It was late before the last of these had passed out, but even then the dead was not left alone. Loving hearts, clergy and laity alike, watched through the night till the grey November dawn of the day that was to see the Bishop's body laid to rest in the midst of those whom he always thought of as his people.

The actual funeral ceremony almost baffles description. It was not only that the Bishop of Lichfield with Bishop Anson and the Archdeacons

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led the way, that the clergy were present in their hundreds, that influential laity, headed by the Earl of Lichfield and the High Sheriff of Shropshire, were in conspicuous attendance, and that deputations were to be found in long procession, headed by the Mayor and Borough Magistrates of Stoke : it was not these things that made the impression and caused people to say afterwards that they should never forget that day : no, it was the vast crowd of the working men and women of the Potteries who stood in silent ranks, six deep, to see him pass. To the older among them he was a personal friend, to the younger he was a household word. The potters, the miners, the ironworkers, all were there. There was not one among them who did not know how he had cared and striven through the best years of his life for all that could help those fellow-men of his among whom he lived.

It was the privilege of the representatives of the Miners' Permanent Relief Society to bear the Bishop's body to the grave in the cemetery at Hartshill, in witness of the greatest of his social labours : but so wide had been his sympathies, and so far-reaching his ever-ready help, that there must have been hundreds standing there who felt an equal claim to render him the last service possible.

The solemn words of committal were read by the

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Bishop of Lichfield, who also gave the blessing at the end. Other portions of the service were taken by the rectors of Stoke and Hanley.

Memorial services were held on the same day at Penkridge and at St. Chad's, Shrewsbury. In both these churches, as also in the Parish Church of Stoke, and in more than one parish where his help and counsel are sorely missed, memorial brasses and inscriptions have been placed, but the greatest memorial of all will be found written in the hearts of his people who knew him as Rector of Stoke, and, in everything but name, Bishop of the Potteries.

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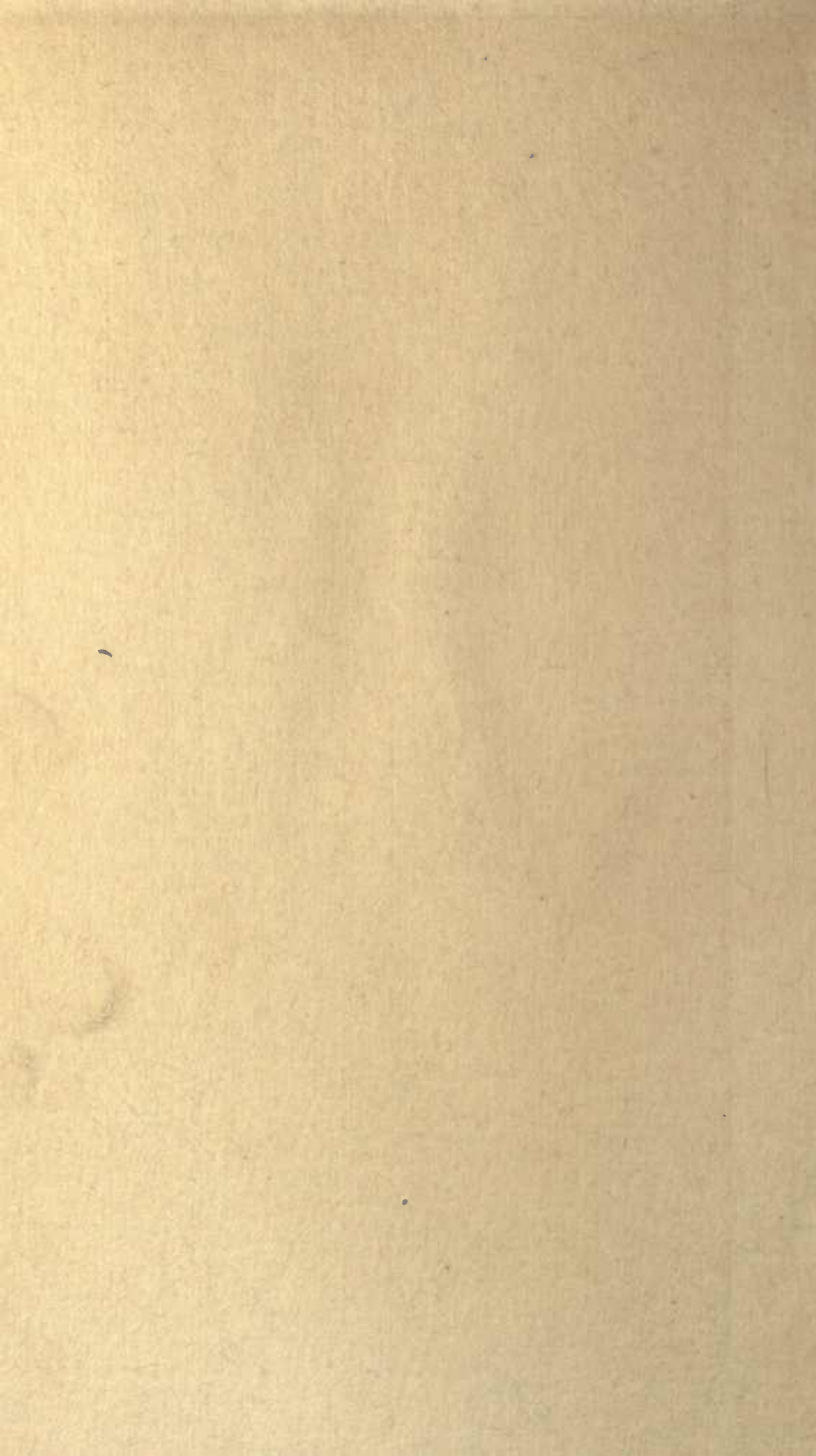
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